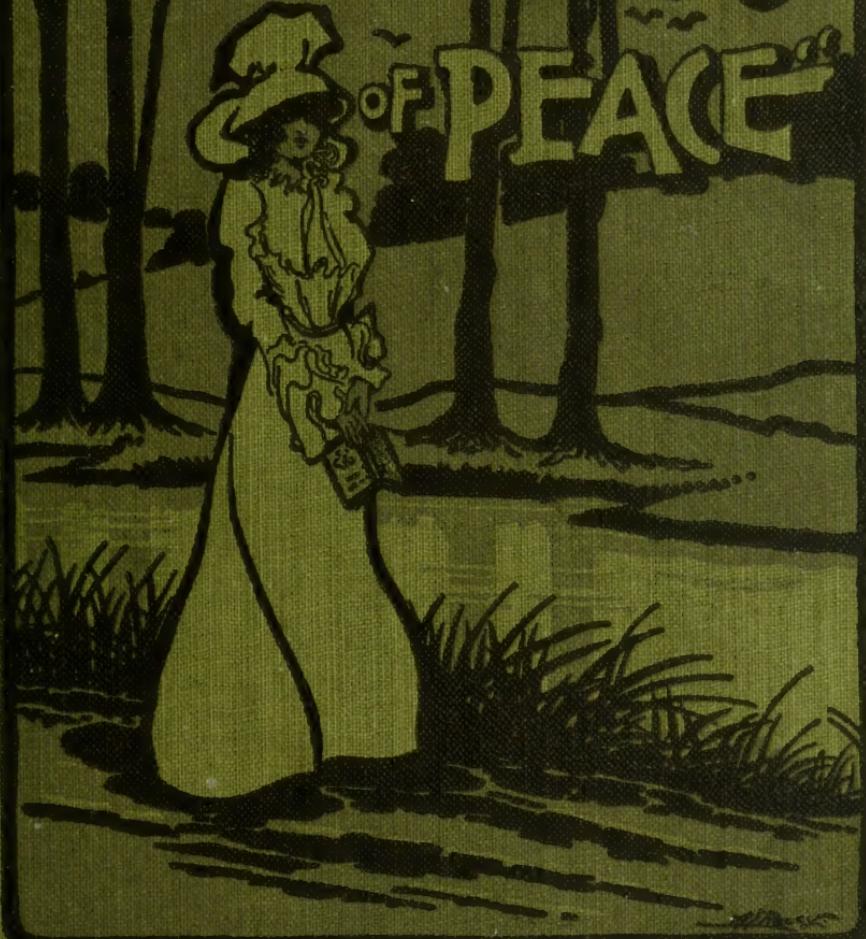


"IN THE PATHS OF PEACE"



BY LILY E. F. BARRY.



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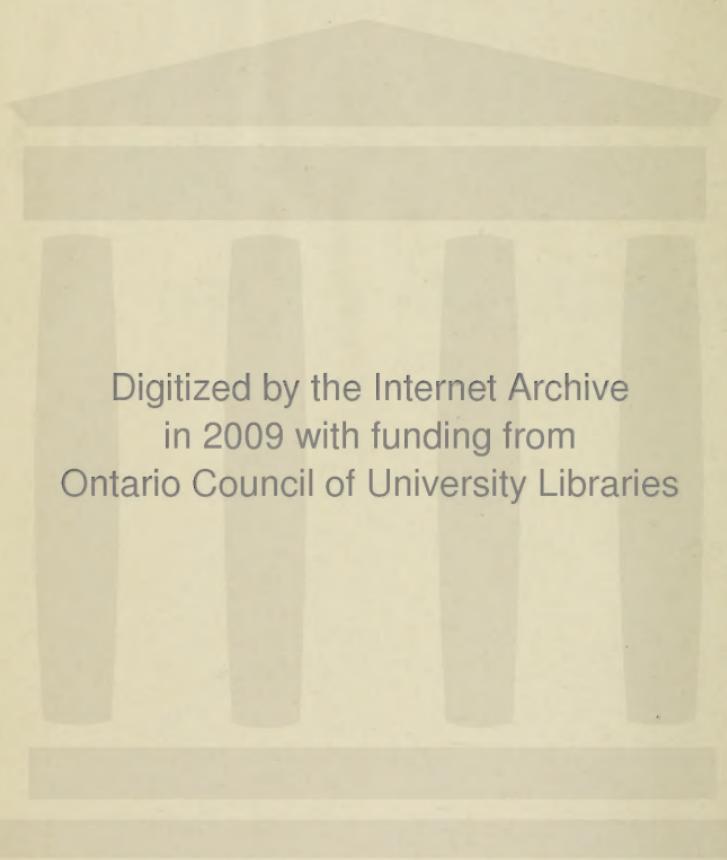
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To dear Carrie
With love from
F.H.

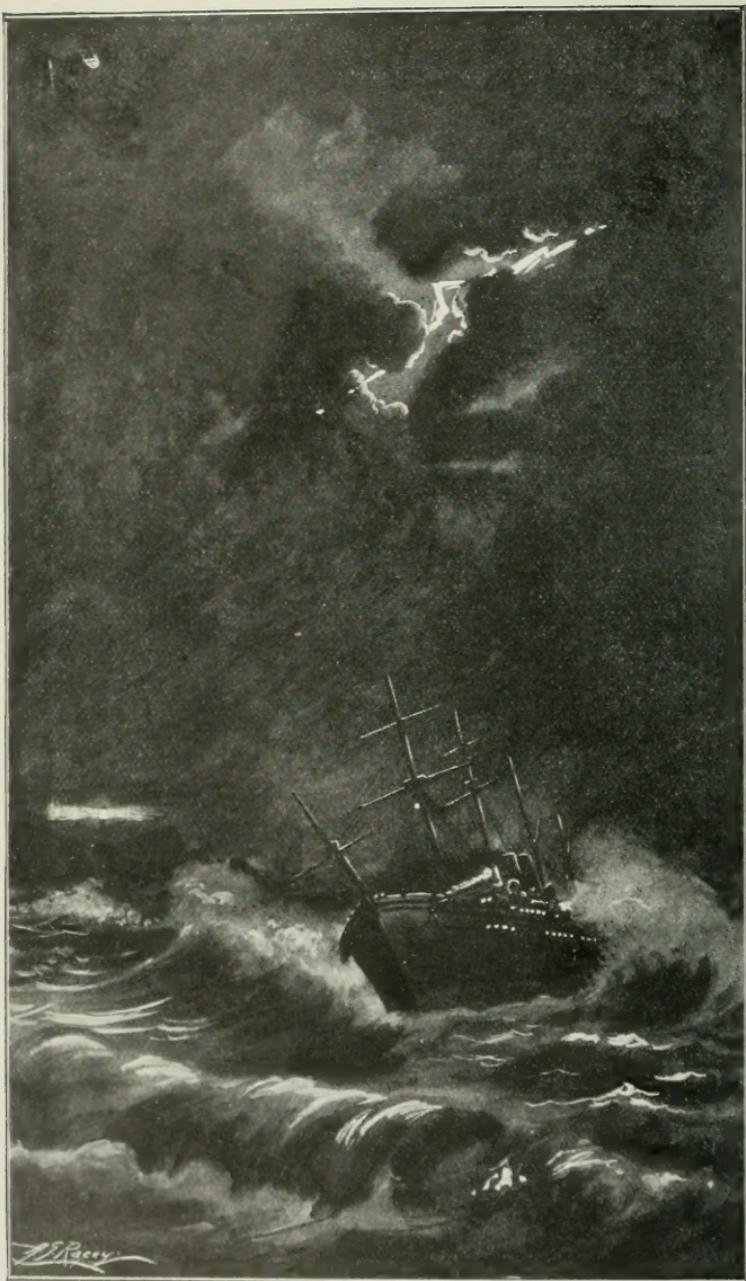
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THE SILENT BEACON.

See Page 193.

IN THE PATHS OF PEACE

BY

LILY E. F. BARRY

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

A. G. RACEY

MONTREAL

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TO MY FATHER.

*Across the years, I seem to see
Myself, a child, upon thy knee,
With eager hand, close held in thine,
Tracing the first laborious line.*

*Ah! loving teacher, patient guide,
Long have I missed thee from my side;
Grieving and grateful, let me come
To lay this token on thy tomb.*

L. E. F. B.

I

THE MESSAGE OF PEACE.

*Peace on earth, good-will to men,
Christ is born in Bethlehem.*

WE want no sweeter message for the week of Christmas than the old, joyous refrain with which the heavens rang, when the "herald angels" announced the birth of the infant Saviour to the waiting shepherds, on the first Christmas night. How triumphantly its pure, unrestrained gladness refutes the theory that Christianity is a sad religion ! Those notes and words of cheer, ringing down the ages with undiminished clearness ever since, have lifted humanity, year after year, believers and unbelievers alike, from the depths of despair in which their own selfishness, folly and sinfulness had plunged them, and have filled them with sweet repentance, new hope, and high aspirations. Who shall calculate the number of blessings to mankind diffused by the spirit of Christmas ? And it comes so graciously at the death of the year, when a mournful and silent nature must otherwise inspire us with sadness.

But neither the frost bound, snow-sheeted landscape, the spectral trees, the inclement skies, nor the wintry blasts, howling and shrieking like baffled spirits of evil, avail when the spirit of Christmas is abroad. Let nature be ever so gloomy, every one laughs and is merry. Who cares for the cold and bleakness out of

doors? Does not the fire blaze merrily within? Is not every chair filled and every heart happy? There are emblems of joy on every side; the fragrant cedar wreathing the doors and festooning the walls, the sly mistletoe lurking overhead in wait for young lovers, the scarlet holly berries gleaming against their glossy foliage, the smiling Christmas tree with its wonderful harvest, the generous feast, but above all, the "good-will" that lends a ready smile to every face and an unwonted heartiness to every hand-shake, until it seems indeed as if the old work-a-day world had undergone a strange, beautiful transformation, shutting out every vista of pain or sorrow, and making us long, like Joshua, to command the sun to stand still, that our joy might be prolonged over the space of many a morrow.

And all this because "Christ was born in Bethlehem" nearly two thousand years ago. Like the majestic strains of the organ, supporting with their deep undertone the joyous trebles of the children singing their Christmas anthems, the solemnity of the festival underlies its traditional "merriment," and brings to those among us who look below the surfaces of things, an awed and reverent sense of its far-reaching and sweet significance. We stand face to face with the stupendous mystery of the Incarnation: we are afraid to enter the stable where a Virgin Mother kneels in rapturous adoration of her new-born Babe; we long for the unquestioning humility of Joseph and the simple child-like faith of the shepherds. A sense of lowliness and unworthiness prostrates us in the presence of the Heavenly Child; we feel a deep stirring of the heart, and our eyes grow dim with tears we know not the meaning of, but which, beyond a doubt, have a value exceeding that of frankincense and myrrh, when dropped at the shrine of the Christ Child on Christmas night.

A thought to cheer the lonely and poor and sad at the blessed season of Christmas is, that in its rich spiritual significance, the festival belongs as much to one as to another ; whatever our earthly circumstances may be, we all stand on the same level around the Crib of Bethlehem. Rather, indeed, do the lowly and unfortunate seem to press the closer, as the shepherds came before the kings.

In France, the Child Christ is always represented bearing gifts in both hands, and the children thank the "little Jesus" for the joyful surprises of well-filled stockings.

It is a fitting belief and one which might well bring comfort to many children of larger growth in other lands. Perhaps among those whose eyes will fall on this page there are bruised and anxious hearts, to whom joy has long been a stranger. Shall not even they look up to the Star of Bethlehem and be comforted at the thought of the Child with His hands full of gifts ? They have but to ask and they shall receive. Surely they can find in this sweet promise wherewith to furnish forth a glad heart for Christmas morning !

Be happy, at least for the day, even you whose cheeks are still wet with tears from some recent bereavement, or whose hearts are still sore with bitter disappointment. Be happy for the sake of the little ones, for the sake of those who love and live with you, as well as for your own. Put off the vesture of grief and care you have worn so long, and put on a holiday garment just for the day. You are not forgotten, you are not alone, even though you cannot see your part in the programme of rejoicing, even though the gifts and the feasting and the lights seem not for you. There are gifts not made with hands which a loving Father has prepared for you : there is a banquet of incomparable sweetness set forth for the hungry and the weary ;

there is the Light that shineth in darkness which can touch the dullest life with infinite splendour. Whether we be of God's own poor or among the most favoured children of men, we all have a right to be glad on Christmas Day. In some special sense, known only to ourselves and God, if we but choose to correspond with what it offers us, it will be for each of us "A Merry Christmas."



II

THE REAL JOY OF CHRISTMAS.

*Christmas comes but once a year,
And to all it brings good cheer.*

IT is by no means uncommon, at this season of the year, to hear men and women frankly confess that they "hate" and "dread" Christmas. The explanation of this singular attitude towards a festival which, of all others, should be most favourable to a happy state of mind, is usually the lack of means to enjoy all the good things the season brings to the rich, in particular, the pleasure of bestowing valuable gifts on friends and relatives. From one point of view, it is undoubtedly depressing to be so handicapped, but it surely does not improve the situation to look only on its gloomy side. The true Christmas spirit is an affair of the heart, not of dollars and cents, and it is doing an injustice to our friends to apprehend a diminution of their regard for us because we are unable to offer them substantial proofs of our affection. It would be a grave dereliction from duty to expend the money urgently needed for household expenses on holiday gifts for those outside one's immediate family. No one is expected to do such a thing, nor to offer explanations for not doing it. But the poorest among us are not exempt from the obligation of adding to the Christmas cheer of those we live with. This may be done in a very graceful way, and at little or no expense, if some thought is given to the matter beforehand. Many charming devices for proving a kind remembrance of one's

friends at this festive season must readily occur to one of a loving and generous disposition. Our chief business is to make "good cheer" for as many people as we possibly can. Rich or poor, let us enjoy our Christmas, and openly, so that half-hearted neighbors and friends may catch the joyous infection and go and do likewise. Even if the larder and the children's stockings are not filled to overflowing, because times are hard, we can at least brighten the home with bits of cedar and holly, give the youngsters their chances of fun under the mistletoe, and bring back the spirit of many a happy Christmas long past, by telling the old stories, singing the old songs and playing the old games.

A year often works great changes in a home. It is enough for thankfulness if, just at this time, we have our dear ones healthy and happy under the same roof with us. Next year, they may be sadly dispersed, and if Christmas is not made much of, simply because you cannot make more of it, regrets will haunt you in future years. "If I had known it was to be the last, I might have done so much!" is a thought that saddens many a heart at the recurrence of the day that will be kept no more on earth by a beloved child, husband, or parent. You think you have not much to give your children, but you forget that beyond all price are the dear and precious memories of a home ruled by love and cheerfulness. Few of us can recall in later life, the number and nature of the gifts that used to gladden us on Christmas morning, but who ever forgets the delightful mysteries and anticipations of Christmas Eve, the early waking, loving greetings, the surprises and joyful excitement of the great morning, the merrymaking, and happy tiredness that brought the beautiful day to a close? This is what lives in the heart for long years after, and lends to other Christmases a consecration and significance wholly personal to each of us.

III

THE YEAR BEFORE US.

Discourage fanciful ideas, abstract notions, and all ill-considered attempts to reach ends, which, however desirable in themselves, are not placed within the compass of your abilities or duties.... Perform those duties which are present, plain and positive.

—Daniel Webster.

HOWEVER little one may be given to the habit of introspection, a backward glance or two at the opening of a New Year is almost inevitable. They are not agreeable, these backward glances. Often they make our cheeks burn with shame, our brows darken with self-contempt. The vista they reveal lies through a long valley of humiliation, through which are flitting, like accusing spirits, the ghosts of our dead sins. So many for pride, so many for selfishness, for extravagance, malice, hatred, jealousy and covetousness, for impatience, anger and recrimination! So many alas! for wasted hours, and unheeded opportunities for misapplied energies, unworthy ambitions, neglected duties, breaches of trust and it may be, other lapses from our ideal which we hardly dare to name, even to ourselves.

Truly, a disheartening record which might well induce despair were it not for the white stone here and there marking a duty faithfully performed, a sorrow nobly borne, an injury forgiven, a temptation resisted, a ministration of mercy, a soft answer, a word in season. This much at least, remains—in the midst of the

desolate wreckage of good intentions strewing the paths we have trod—to keep our courage up as we face another ordeal which, for aught we know, may prove even more severe than the last. The New Year stretches fair before us in virginal whiteness. What kind of foot-prints shall we leave on its immaculate surface?

No wiser counsel can be offered to those who are eager for guidance in the task of self-government, than the words quoted above. They were addressed originally by the famous American orator to the electors of a district in New England, but they seem peculiarly applicable to our sex. We are so apt to waste thought and enthusiasm on chimerical hopes and aspirations, overlooking, in our misplaced eagerness to reach unattainable ends, the “duties which are present, plain and positive.” It is right to aspire, to have noble ambitions and lofty aims, but it is wrong, when means fail us to compass these, to despise opportunities of humbler service.

Your work may be uncongenial, hateful even. You may cherish the secret determination of freeing yourself from its yoke at the earliest opportunity. Very well, but meanwhile who will do it if not you, and since you must do it, why not prove your superior qualifications by performing it in a superior manner?



IV

BE NOBLE.

Better not be at all than not be noble.

—Alfred Tennyson.

NOIBILITY of character and of purpose gives to the humblest life a dignity that raises it to the level of the highest. Not what we do, but how and why we do it, determines our rank and status in the order of true merit. To serve faithfully is more honorable than to command badly. True nobility adapts itself courteously to the exigencies of time, place, and circumstances, concerned not with what is due to itself, but intent rather on supplying the needs of others. In reading the lives of great men and women, one cannot fail to be impressed with at least this one point of resemblance in which they all met—namely, a readiness to accept existing conditions with equanimity, to submit cheerfully to hardships, limitations and hindrances, rising above them all eventually by sheer patience, steadfastness, and determination. With a great end in view, it is wonderful how quickly one can surmount the most threatening obstacles, counting as nothing the toil, pain, or privations that must be endured. But when the heart is set only on small selfish aims, when it is greedy of pain, pleasure, praise, and every little passing gratification, the merest trifle becomes a means to the end, and thus may prove a source of disappointment or irritation as well as of satisfaction.

To discern true nobility, mark the attitude of any

individual man or woman towards the small gains and losses that come inevitably in the course of an ordinary day. To be easily vexed and worried, by untoward things that to-morrow shall have no significance at all, proves the shallow, ignoble mind. The ability to see beyond them, to rise above them, proclaims true nobility. In moments of hesitation, when the lower impulse seems to threaten the higher, the line above quoted should help to clinch the resolution to conquer the inherent weakness of the flesh. "Better not be at all than not be noble."



V

OUR MARK.

Let our lives be pure as snowfields, where our footsteps leave a mark but not a stain.

—Madame Swetchine.

AS clear and unmistakeable as the prints of human feet on the unsullied surface of new-fallen snow, is the impression left by the personality of each one of us on the minds of those with whom we come in daily contact. All unconsciously, it may be, we reveal with extraordinary distinctness, the exact trend and limitations of our moral nature, the size and shape, so to speak, of our souls, as well as the direction in which they are travelling.

It is well sometimes, by reflection, to retrace our steps and consider the character of these impressions.

Stand for a moment, as it were, outside of yourself, and look dispassionately at your own life, as at that of a stranger, overlooking nothing, but regarding yourself with the same unbiassed and scientific curiosity as you would an inhabitant of the planet Mars suddenly brought under your observation. How terrible the truth would seem to some of us, viewed in this cold and critical fashion, which, nevertheless, is the fashion of the world in which we live. We are apt to credit ourselves with all the good intentions which we have never succeeded in carrying out, the generous impulses to which we have not yielded, the kind thoughts about others which have never found expression in words, the tenderness which has concealed itself beneath a cold exterior. We know all about our own secret emotions of gratitude, love, repentance, religious fervour, and we

conceive more or less highly of ourselves because of this knowledge. But we are apt to forget that in the eyes of the world no account is taken of the possibilities of good within us. We are judged alone by the outward manifestations of such qualities and attainments as are deemed lovable and estimable. In the majority of cases, the impression created on the minds of others by an individual human being is that of the predominant fault or weakness. Such an one to us is always neither more nor less than "a selfish creature," "an incurable boaster," "vanity personified," "a hopelessly untidy person," "an inveterate talker," "a bore," "a prig," "a simpleton," or "a tyrant." Happily, there are, of course, the few whose leading attributes are of a purely amiable character. One is always "charming," another "distinguished," a third "witty," a fourth "clever," "kind," "tactful," as the case may be.

It is the exceptional man or woman who is sufficiently free from self-complacency, and awake to his or her own deficiencies, to form an accurate idea of his or her own personality as it appears to the world. Our friends flatter us, our relatives are blind to our failings, and when those who are hostile to us tell us unpalatable truths our self-love suggests that they are actuated by jealousy or some other unworthy motive. Thus every influence from without and within conspires to increase our self-esteem.

With due precautions against becoming morbidly introspective, the habit of looking at our own lives from the outside would greatly stimulate our moral and intellectual growth, and in time, make it possible for us, in accordance with the poetic idea embodied in Madame Swetchine's exhortation, to leave footprints behind us that would mark but not stain the fair field of our endeavours.

VI

SELF-HELP.

The only sound and healthy description of assistance is that which teaches independence and self-help.

—W. E. Gladstone.

FROM the time that a child begins to learn the use of his feet, the mother gradually gives up the practice of carrying him in her arms. She feels no decrease of tenderness towards the little one that toddles by her side, but she knows that for his right physical development he needs to exercise the unused muscles that are called into play only when he is erect and active. No intelligent person would accuse her of unkindness when she resists the appeal of the little outstretched arms and gently insists that "Baby will walk." If she followed the inclination of her own heart she would keep the child in her arms as long as her strength permitted her to do so, but knowing this would not be for his ultimate good she coaxes or even commands him to use his feet, and thereby teaches him his first lessons in independence and self-help.

How much or how little we should, in later life, assist others weaker or more unfortunate than ourselves is a problem that confronts us all, and is by no means easy to solve. We have hasty impulses of generosity which move us to give of our surplus wherever it appears to be needed, or we even deprive ourselves of some accustomed comfort in order to bestow food and raiment on a suffering fellow-creature. We do not immediately perceive the harm that is frequently wrought by the indiscriminate sharing of our substance

with all comers, and we experience a certain gratification in alleviating distress that amply repays us for the amount expended in the act. Unfortunately, a day comes when our complacency on this point is rudely disturbed by the discovery that our thoughtless gifts have simply been so many premiums on idleness, intemperance, avarice, or wastefulness.

There are no doubt many cases of real need that call for prompt assistance which should not be withheld on theoretic grounds, but in general, it may be safely affirmed, that a large proportion of those who show a willingness to depend on others for the necessities of existence do so as much from a disinclination to work and to save, as from an urgent necessity to invoke outside aid. It therefore becomes a duty to weigh well the probable effects of our well-meant but sometimes imprudent efforts on behalf of a fellow-creature whom we consider more unfortunate than ourselves, when in reality he may be simply more extravagant, indolent, or careless. To help any one effectually is to give him an opportunity to help himself. If he shows an unwillingness to take advantage of the opportunity thus offered, no further proof of his unworthiness is wanted.

You have all heard of the young man who one day found a gold piece on the ground and who ever after went through life with his eyes down, hoping for a repetition of his luck. He never found another, and he missed seeing all the beauty of the world, and the valuable opportunities that came in his way.

It is the same with some persons, who are once generously helped out of a difficulty. Thereafter they expect to be assisted in the same way whenever trouble assails them, and their self-reliance, courage, determination and independence gradually disappear. We must be careful when we extend one hand to save that with the other we do not unconsciously destroy.

VII

THE POWER OF KIND WORDS.

Happiness is a great power of holiness. Thus, kind words, by their power of producing happiness, have also a power of producing holiness, and so of winning men to God.

—F. W. Faber.

VIRTUOUS persons who assume a censorious or reproachful attitude towards the weak and erring may be actuated by the best intentions, but no more unfortunate means could be adopted to secure the end they have in view. The first result of severity or manifest disapproval is unhappiness to its object, and no condition is less favourable than this to moral reformation. One's influence for good over one's fellow-creatures is in a direct ratio to one's power of conferring happiness on them. A kind, genial, sympathetic nature that loves the sinner while hating the sin, has many more chances of success in moving wayward hearts to repentance than the austere religious one that has only a frown or a rebuke for human frailties.

Indeed, it can hardly be doubted that among the surprises of the Judgment Day, not the least will be the discovery that multitudes of souls were driven back from the paths of virtue by the repellent aspect of those who went before them.

The kind of perfection which makes any man or woman disagreeable to those around them should be regarded with suspicion. Real virtue is not less, but even more, alluring than vice in any shape. The holiest man I have ever known was also the kindest and the

most agreeable. Only to see him and to hear his pleasant greeting was a benediction. No one ever came in contact with him without experiencing the benefit of the good influence that seemed to emanate from him as a veritable odour of sanctity. The most irreligious men and notorious sinners in the same town could not speak of him save with respect and admiration. Of infinite tact, patience and gentleness, he never permitted himself to interfere with the workings of individual consciences, but those who were troubled with doubts, remorse, or a longing for repentance, were drawn to him as to a magnet. He pitied the erring, he was never angry with them, never scornful, never reproachful. "So must Christ have been to sinners," was the thought uppermost in every heart his kind ministrations had refreshed and comforted.

Few and far between are the living exemplars of this lovely type of the saviour of souls. Most of us, with pitiful presumption, rate our own virtues so high that we hold ourselves aloof from those who falter and fail in the upward path, or, we make their struggle still more difficult by looks of cold disapproval or words of stinging rebuke, and even occasionally by uncalled-for and therefore impertinent remonstrance. This is not our part in life. We are not the judges of one another's actions or motives. That is the divine prerogative. Can we doubt that it is safe in God's hands? For us, poor sinners, and sorry failures that we are at the best, it is most becoming that we should close our eyes and our lips against all temptations to ascribe evil to our neighbour. If we cannot cheer him by kind words, and uplift him by a noble example, we can at least let him go his way in peace. We can uphold the honour and dignity and beauty and loveableness of true religion by refraining from the slightest word or act unworthy of one who aspires to the name of Christian.

VIII

THE SECRET OF TRUE SKILL.

*Each might his several province well command.
Would all but stoop to what they understand.*

—Alexander Pope.

THE consciousness of power is an unfailing source of pleasure to its possessor. Knowledge is power, and therefore whosoever acquires real knowledge in any department of science, art or industry, becomes by so much the master of him who remains ignorant of the same subject. There is probably no living human being who is not fitted to excel in some particular kind of work, but not all take the right measure for ascertaining the real bent of their natures, and the limit of their capacity for useful achievement. The average girl lacks thoroughness in her methods of working and studying. She chooses a calling often at random, or for the sake of some slight social or other trivial advantage which has nothing whatever to do with her special fitness for it. Then she strives for the kind of prominence which is achieved by outward appearances and is satisfied if she makes a decent living and wins a few agreeable friends. But she knows nothing of the sweet satisfaction that grows out of the conscious mastery of a subject, through serious and concentrated effort to overcome its difficulties. One girl thinks she will be a pianist, not because she is "moved by the concord of sweet sounds," and because her love of music surpasses every other love she has hitherto felt, but because a certain degree of proficiency in piano-playing will ensure her popularity and bring her into prominence wherever she goes. She will not succeed, because one so vain and shallow will never understand the exquisite

meanings of the "art divine," and how then may she hope to interpret them for others? Another wishes to be a trained nurse, that she may wear a becoming costume and, possibly be brought into romantic association with interesting patients. No earnest desire to understand the wonderful mechanism of the body and the laws that govern health, no large sympathy for suffering humanity here. But a career built upon vanity and selfishness as a foundation can have no stability. Better is it to look lower and stoop to what one can understand than to attempt tasks beyond one's strength or comprehension.

A girl who stays at home and learns to be a good housekeeper or cook stands infinitely higher in the scale of human usefulness than the one who goes abroad for musical instruction and returns a merely third-rate performer. A well-darned stocking is far more beautiful to contemplate than a badly painted picture, and a visit to the sick room of a friendless invalid infinitely surpasses in value the composition of an inferior sonnet.

It does not follow that one should never seek to rise above the condition in which one has been born, or placed by untoward circumstances. The moral of my homily is this: Be earnest and thorough in whatever you attempt to do, so that you may "well command" whatever province you choose as your own. Do not be an *amateur sans amour*, nor a *connoisseur sans connaissance*. Sheer idleness is better than misapplied industry. At least, when you do nothing, you refrain from wasting good material, like the girl who thinks she can paint, or from getting on other people's nerves, like the girl who thinks she can play the piano or sing. It is so easy not to do things. When we have discovered that our capacity is humble, let us have sense enough to be satisfied to apply it to humble tasks.

IX

THE DUTY OF RESTING.

When you have found a day to be idle, be idle for a day.

—Chinese Poet.

GIVEN a favourable opportunity, the majority of mankind require little persuasion to take a holiday. By many, indeed, the lightest pretext for idleness is seized upon all too eagerly ; but there are on the other hand, numbers of women to whom the art of resting and taking recreation is a wholly unknown source of pleasure and profit. To such as these the words of the Chinese poet may be appropriately addressed.

As a rule, it is the woman who has the greatest need of a holiday who is most averse to taking one. The busy housekeeper, the tired mother of a young family, working the treadmill of her unending daily tasks from week's end to week's end, grows at last to believe that for her, beyond the narrow circle of her home, the world no longer exists. So effectually does she cut herself off from all interests not immediately affecting the welfare of her family, that if you would suggest to her to take a holiday, she would be at a loss to know where or how to spend it. She even takes much credit to herself for being so devoted to her home and family that she is unable to spare a moment from the labours her devotion imposes. It does not occur to her that by thus wilfully shutting her eyes on the brightness and beauty that belongs to her as much as to any one else, she is offering an affront to Providence who placed her here and surrounded her with so many evidences of watchful care and love.

The sun may shine, and sweet flowers bloom and birds sing, and all nature invite her to come forth and praise the Maker of these things so good to contemplate, but with her poor short-sighted wisdom she judges it of more importance, however glorious the day and joyful the occasion, to sit within doors darning stockings or making pies, than to go out and regale her eyes and refresh her heart with the beauty of God's inimitable handiwork. No wonder that she grows dull and irritable, that her step loses its spring, her eye its brightness, her lip the habit of smiling. And even if she were content to sacrifice herself alone to her mistaken idea of duty, it might be said that she was a heroine after a fashion ; but her incessant industry, her persistent refusal to rest and take recreation, ultimately assume the force of a rebuke to her husband and children, and they too feel compelled to forego many an innocent relaxation that would be of permanent value to their bodies and souls.

It is well for the toiling house-mother who will never acknowledge that her work is done, to bear in mind that, measured against the shortness of time and the grandeur of the universe, her little daily tasks are often of an insignificance which makes them utterly unworthy of the arduous pains she bestows on them. The sweeping, the mending, the baking, may easily enough be put off for a day, once in a while, and no one will be any the worse, but a thousand times better, if the hours thus gained are applied to healthy enjoyment in agreeable surroundings.

The day in the country or on the river with all its lovely sights and sounds and healing influences, lives in the memory long after, taking the edge off many succeeding household cares, and filling the heart with fresh courage to face new difficulties. If you can find only a day to be idle, be idle, at least for a day.

X

THE VALUE OF COURTESY.

Manners sometimes count for more than morals. Most of us would rather pass an evening with a well-bred highwayman, than an hour with a clownish saint.

—From “*Guesses at Truth.*”

TRUE courtesy, is so closely allied to real virtue that it is well-nigh impossible for the one to exist independently of the other. The foundation of good manners being an unselfish desire to please, the practice of them necessarily entails the cultivation of all the most amiable virtues. The proud, the covetous, the envious, the malicious, the vindictive, the irritable, or the slovenly, never attain perfection of manners. On the other hand, the truly upright, generous, modest, can scarcely fail, by their means of education ever so limited, to acquire a charm of manner which renders them eligible for companionship with the most cultivated people.

A “clownish saint,” is therefore in reality, a paradox. No one who has scaled the heights of Christian perfection can have failed to perceive that the great precept of charity, “love one another,” enjoins on all men the same gentleness, forbearance and thoughtful consideration for their kind, as are commanded by the unwritten laws of politeness. There has never been a more perfect gentleman than the Founder of Christianity. How, then, can any pretend to be like Him, whose rude clownish manners inspire their fellow-creatures with abhorrence and contempt,

and from whose society a sensitive person would turn with relief to that of a well-mannered highwayman?

Though boorish manners are less common among women than men, our sex, unfortunately, has much to answer for, for the discredit brought on religion by certain professing Christians, who are pre-eminently lacking in true courtesy, and in those minor graces of character which would most readily endear them to their kind. We all know the active "church worker," who goes about spreading terror in her wake, expecting the whole congregation to measure their actions by the dictates of her conscience, keeping an awful eye on the hardy delinquent who seeks to evade her influence, gratuitously instructing the parson in his duties, and keeping the parson's wife in a state of wholesome subjection. Under the pretext of duty, she indulges an ungovernable curiosity concerning the affairs of her neighbour (*i.e.*, mankind of every description and both sexes) by shamelessly cross-examining every individual she meets on the subject of his or her most private affairs. Her visits are cleverly timed to elicit an invitation to luncheon or dinner, and she improves the shining occasion in the intervals of satisfying a most voracious appetite, by laying down the law for her hostess in matters domestic as well as devotional, keeping at the same time on the alert for indications of extravagance, or incompetence in the service, which might serve as pegs on which to hang a wholesome reproof, or as examples to be held up to her next victim.

And such a woman esteems herself the model of the parish, when in reality she is frightening many well-meaning ones away from active participation in church work by the fear of collision with her, or of the danger of becoming like her.

There is nothing aggressive about real devotion to great interests. Quiet good breeding is the most

efficient auxiliary of the zealous Christian. Without it the best directed efforts are likely to result in more harm than good, but by its aid mountains may be moved. Politeness, like the lever Archimedes longed for, can move the world.



XI

THE DOUBTING HEART.

*At every trifle, scorn to take offence,
That always shows great pride or little sense.*

—Pope.

 GIRL I know lives in a perpetual turmoil because of the slights she imagines her friends put upon her. Her egotism is positively a disease. She seems to think she occupies so large a place in the universe that no one of her acquaintance can utter a single word or perform a single action without the avowed or covert intention of wounding her feelings. She does not realise that it betokens a grievous want of charity to harbour such unkind and generally unjust suspicions of really well-meaning persons, nor that her universal distrust of others is equivalent to a confession of egregious vanity, which suffers unless constantly fed with praise and flattering attentions. A friend, absorbed in thought, it may be, or perhaps deeply worried about some private matter, passes her on the street without seeing her, or bows with less than usual cordiality, and straightway, she flushes with indignation ; feelings of anger, resentment, perhaps even of revenge are allowed unchecked to fill her heart. It would not occur to her to say : " My friend looks anxious to-day, I fear she may have received bad news," and to pass on; undisturbed save by a kindly impulse of sympathy.

A letter remains unanswered, a visit is not returned for a few weeks, and the unconscious offender is bitterly accused of rudeness or inconstancy, while all

the time the omission of the expected courtesy may be due to illness, pressing engagements, or other important causes not always easily explained to one outside the family circle.

Similarly, in countless ways, one who goes about seeking for causes of offence, may find them, real or imaginary, on every side. How more than foolish thus voluntarily to embitter one's life with fancied grievances, when with a little less pride and a little more sense, one can readily learn to overlook trifling vexations, and to suppress feelings unworthy of oneself and unjust to one's friends.

The habit of distrust, if suffered to take root in the heart is difficult to dislodge ; young girls should therefore guard against it as one of the most formidable obstacles to their future happiness. It is better to be generous and believing, even if we are sometimes deceived, than from too great caution, to go through life with doubt, like a canker worm for ever gnawing at our hearts.



XII

LOVE IS ALL.

*The world's ambitions, empty cares,
Its small disquietudes and insect stings
Disturbed her never. She was one made up
Of feminine affections, and her life
Was one full stream of love from fount to sea.*

—Henry Taylor.

HE poet whose lines I have quoted has taken for his theme “A Perfect Woman,” and even in this short extract, he has given us a very beautiful and true picture.

The perfectly serene mind, impervious to the pin-pricks of common, every-day cares ; the loving heart so filled with thoughts of others as to leave no room for selfish repining, these are what make the ideal woman. She is not described as learned, nor witty nor famous, nor even beautiful, but she is “made up of feminine affections,” which like tendrils on a vine, attach all hearts to her, and hold them in durance so gentle that only at the moment of parting is their real strength revealed.

It is only through Love then, that woman may expect to reach her true destiny. Be she ever so rich and otherwise fortunate, a woman who leads a loveless life misses all the joy of existence. Her finest qualities lie dormant, the most endearing traits of her character are unsuspected, until the touch of the great magician calls them forth. It is not given to every woman to love and be loved in the way the poets like to write about, but

there are other ways hardly less sweet and satisfying, in which each of us may find an outlet for our "feminine affections."

Perhaps it is an aged parent, or a helpless infant, or invalid, who leans upon our love. Be it husband, parent, child or friend, let our devotion be but unselfish enough, and it will prove the highest source of happiness to ourselves as well as to its object. Without this foundation, no woman can make a success of her life. She will build with cards upon shifting sands, and some day will sit weeping among the ruins, realizing when too late the cause of her failure. Let Love, then, be our watchword, the end and aim of our existence here; as it also will be in the world to come.



XIII

MINE ENEMY.

*He who hath a thousand friends
Hath not a friend to spare,
And he who hath an enemy
Will meet him everywhere.*

—Omar Khayyam.

HERE are persons who imagine it is a proof of superiority to keep themselves aloof from the rest of their kind, and who, acting under this strange delusion, go through life without ever calling any human being a friend. When they hear of quarrels and jealousies among their neighbours, they congratulate themselves on the immunity they have secured against such unpleasantness by a policy of self-isolation, and regard with a lofty scorn all who frankly confess their dependence on human society for the pleasures of life.

But in the majority of mankind, the instinct of sociability is strongly developed, and the power of making and keeping friends is recognized pretty generally as one of the most important factors of success and happiness.

Some fortunate individuals possess it in such a remarkable degree that it even proves a source of embarrassment, their friendship being desired and sought eagerly by all who meet them.

Others are under the necessity of making constant

efforts to win and retain the esteem of desirable acquaintances, and a luckless few never succeed at all in really inspiring their fellows with sincere feelings of affection.

To make enemies is an easier matter. It is difficult for the most amiably disposed person in the world to go through life without exciting jealousy in some quarter, and from this unhappy vice, quarrels and bitter hatreds spring all too readily.

Great is the power of an enemy to poison one's daily peace, for, as Omar says, we meet him everywhere. It is therefore worth while to exercise some care and self-restraint in order to avoid giving offence to any with whom we may have dealings. But for this, it is not necessary to take refuge in the ignoble safety of complete isolation, which must ultimately generate a narrow, selfish, suspicious nature. The better plan is to meet one's fellow-creatures in an open, friendly spirit, making careful selection here and there of such as are worthy to grapple to one's soul with hooks of steel, and exercising tact and judgment in keeping at arm's length those who are likely to prove troublesome or dangerous.

True friendship, resting on a basis of mutual affection and esteem, is inspired by individual worth alone, and thus is not susceptible of change ; but, if made to depend on outward circumstances, such as convenience or temporary advantage, friendship is indeed but a name, and destined to vanish before the first real test put upon it.

Enmity is often the fruit of a false friendship. If you would have no enemies, be hostile to none. Love begets love in the wide as well as in the more limited sense.

XIV

CONTENTMENT.

If the sun shines on me, I care not for the moon.
—Italian Proverb.

IF in the full sunshine of a golden summer day you happened to meet by the wayside a fellow-creature, sunk in deep dejection because he could not see the moon, you would say, “He is mad,” and would pass on, without even wasting an argument on one so obviously devoid of sense. Yet who amongst us is not, at times, guilty of a like foolishness? How often, wilfully ignoring the most fruitful sources of happiness, that surround us like the sunlight on every side, do we not deliberately shut our eyes and grieve and wonder because some lesser joy or gratification is beyond our reach.

The best gifts of the Creator have been lavished on us in such generous measure that they weary us, becoming cheap and common in our eyes. We give barely a thought, for instance, to the marvellous mechanism of our bodies and the endless variety of agreeable sensations of which they are susceptible. In health, we forget to be thankful for our blessed immunity from suffering. In the often unwilling performance of our daily tasks, we fail to realise the despair of those who are unable to find work to do. Basking in the warmth and radiance of enduring family affection, we cry for

the moon of gratified vanity, of an empty popularity, of passing social prominence. There are women who take a far keener delight in exciting the admiration of strangers than in tightening the bonds of love and respect that unite them to husband or children. In a vain attempt to outdo a neighbour, they will spend time and money that they grudge to bestow in an effort to amuse a fractious little one or to increase the comfort of home.

There is some streak of perversity in human nature which causes it to view with indifference the blessings actually within its reach, while attaching a quite fictitious value to those that appear to be inaccessible. This peculiarity often develops into a real mania. There are women who cannot possibly feel contented while denied any privilege or possession accorded to other women. The better fortune of a friend or neighbour is to them only a constant and mortifying reminder of the restrictions which prevent them from sharing in the coveted joy or gain. Such an unhappy disposition reveals a discreditably low mental and moral level, which, as long as the possessor makes no effort to rise above it, neither commands nor deserves sympathy.

If, instead of counting up enviously the superior advantages enjoyed by those around us, we would give the same time to estimating at their true value the blessings vouchsafed to ourselves and denied to so many, we would not often be guilty of the absurdity of crying for the moon while the sun is shining brightly over our heads.

TRUE DISTINCTION.

*From lowest place where virtuous things proceed,
The place is dignified by the doer's deed.*

—Shakespeare.

HUMANITY may be divided into two classes, namely, those who borrow prestige from their surroundings and those who lend it to them. The distinction is plainly perceptible, wherever men and women congregate in any numbers, whether in a tiny hamlet or in the crowded metropolis. There are always some who shine only in reflected light, while others carry the source of illumination within themselves. The former are not greatly to be envied, because their temporary prominence, being dependent on circumstances outside of their control, is necessarily precarious. The latter, on the contrary, suffer no depreciation in altered conditions or surroundings, but are welcomed wherever they go and in whatever guise, being readily recognized as valuable additions to every circle.

It is therefore tantamount to a confession of personal inferiority—or of mediocrity, at least,—to make one's success in any direction, hinge on purely external conditions or circumstances. What we are, not what we do, nor where and how we live, must ever be the most obvious and interesting fact concerning us.

If we make the most of such opportunities for self-

improvement as are within our reach, we cannot fail to achieve a kind of personal distinction that will announce itself to all who meet us.

If we are unable to win admiration, esteem or popularity, in our native hamlet, it is extremely unlikely that greater success will attend us, in that sense, in the crowded city. Human society, the world over, is composed of the same elements. Men and women of every grade are subject to the same emotions, the same passions, the same jealousies and ambitions. The qualities that make the working-girl a favourite among her humble companions, are but slightly, if at all, different from those that secure popularity to the woman of rank and fashion. Personal dislikes in high life as well as low, spring from much the same causes.

The biographies of great men and women furnish numberless instances which prove that inherent nobility of character will proclaim itself, no matter how narrowly it is hedged in by unfavourable circumstances. How many once obscure villages and humble homesteads have won world-wide celebrity from the fact that this or that great poet or artist, statesman or philanthropist once lived, or first saw the light within their limits ! And in the great capitals of the world to-day, how often do visitors from distant countries pass coldly by the greatest triumphs of modern architecture, to penetrate to some obscure street where they pause reverently before some shabby house front which is pointed out to them as the birthplace or residence of a man of genius.

It is plain enough that a place, however humble, may be "dignified by the doer's deed." So, when we are tempted to carp at our surroundings and lay upon them the blame of an inferiority which chafes us, let us rather turn the searchlight of criticism inwards, and with proper humility confess that the defect is one of

character, rather than of opportunity. If there be any element of true greatness within us, we shall unconsciously impress it on our work, and reflect it in our personality. When we fail to do this, it is because of our own unfitness, a sense of which should suffice to keep us silent whenever the temptation to rail at our opportunities is uppermost in our hearts.



XVI

MENTAL DIGNITY.

If any one should set your body at the mercy of every passer-by, you would be indignant. When, therefore, you set your own mind at the mercy of every chance, to be troubled and perturbed, have you no shame of this ?

—Selected.

TO be vexed or disturbed over affairs that are entirely the concern of others is, we must regretfully admit, a purely feminine characteristic, as harmful as it is ridiculous, and that is saying a good deal. Every woman will acknowledge that the startling piece of intelligence about a neighbour, which has filled her thoughts for a day to the exclusion of every other, is apt to be received with perfect stolidity by the men of the family who will probably dismiss the subject with a non-committal "Humph," and straightway plunge into the discussion of one quite foreign to it, but in which they take a more legitimate interest. This sensible attitude of the masculine mind to matters without its jurisdiction assumes the aspect of a fault in the eyes of the woman to whom gossip is as the breath of life. John's provoking indifference to the extravagances and eccentricities of his neighbours, instead of being a rebuke for her lack of sense and dignity, becomes merely a source of irritation that reacts to his prejudice in various ways.

For the wrinkles and gray hairs produced by needless

worrying over other people's foibles and blunders, little sympathy or respect can be felt by any sane man or woman. Suppose Mrs. A., who is fat and forty, persists in riding a bicycle ; or Mrs. B., who cannot afford it, patronizes the most expensive milliner ; or Mrs. C., who has a young family, spends more time out of her house than in it ; or Miss Y., of uncertain age, assumes the airs of sixteen. What, then ? Each of these is only playing her part in the great human comedy, as you and I are playing ours, all of us being equally unsuspicuous of the impression we are making on the disinterested spectator. Shall I fret and fume or look sour because my advice has not been asked as to various matters which are quite without the range of my interest or sympathy ? How obviously absurd to allow my equanimity to be disturbed by such irrelevant affairs !

The finest flower of true courtesy as well as the ripest fruit of common sense is the tact which recognizes the prescriptive right of every individual to manage his or her own personal affairs, free from interference, direct or tacit, on the part of mere outsiders. It may not be in the power of all of us to command consideration of this kind from those who surround us, but we can at least exercise it ourselves in favour of others. Not only shall we contribute largely by so doing to the happiness of our family and friends, but we shall also effect a vast economy of nervous and spiritual force to be held in reserve for later expenditure in a worthier cause. A woman who made no effort to shield her body from promiscuous contact with every comer would be quickly branded as a social pariah, despised and denounced by all. Let us take heed lest in our anxiety to maintain a conventional physical standard we neglect the diviner half of our being, letting it be occupied by every low or trivial matter coming within the range of its percep-

tion to the exclusion of what is really fine, helpful and uplifting. If we be not as scrupulous in regard to our minds as to our bodies, our sense of modesty and dignity is but half developed. A commendable degree of fastidiousness in both directions is necessary to produce the perfect flower of true womanhood.



XVII

THE TRUE VALUES OF THINGS.

To call things by their right names and to know their right value is half the science of life. Their true names are the names God calls them by ; their true value is the value He sets upon them.

—F. W. Faber.

NOTHING is more repugnant to us than the idea that we are being deceived by others, though a very little reflection will convince us that we are constantly and systematically deceiving ourselves as well as others. The double motive is not hard to find at the root of nearly all our actions. The plausible, creditable reason for what we are about to do, covers the secret, selfish aim which we would die rather than acknowledge. It has been well said that hypocrisy is the tribute vice pays to virtue. Most of us have the grace to be ashamed of our weaknesses, and we instinctively seek to cover them up with at least the appearance of a good intention. Unfortunately the habit of striving to seem better than we are becomes, in time, a second nature, and, at last, we find a difficulty in determining whether we have any sincerity in us at all. Until we are willing to drop the mask of conscious virtue which it pleases us to wear, and to summon up sufficient courage to look at the true likeness of our souls in the mirror of absolute honesty, we shall not comprehend ever so faintly the nature of the obligations laid upon us as servants of Christ.

It is a mockery to make our religion consist in certain formal acts of outward devotion, performed at stated times and in ways prescribed for us by rule or custom. It is in all the acts of our daily life that our faith and love must show forth as ruling and guiding principles. If we truly love God and our neighbour as we profess to do in church, why that sudden pang of envy and resentment when we see another preferred before us? If, indeed, our hearts are set on spiritual things, how can we explain the passion of anger that invades them when some injury has been done to our property? We claim to be humble, yet the merest shadow of a slight inflicted on us agitates us for days. We say, "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world if he lose his own soul?" Yet nothing delights us more than to see that we are growing rich or advancing to a position of greater prominence in the world. We are told "Judge not," and we cannot let the smallest shortcoming of our neighbour pass unnoticed without presuming to censure him as though we were better than he.

Had we the honesty and the courage to call all our sins by their right names, the names God calls them by, we would indeed often be humbled and horrified at the indictment drawn up against us by conscience. To avoid the species of self-deception which prevents us from seeing ourselves as God sees us, it behooves us to study the right values of things, to measure them by the divine standard only. So long as we are earnestly intent on the pursuit of all that is valuable in the sight of God, we cannot falter nor go astray.

XVIII

THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE.

It is not erudition that makes the intellectual man, but a sort of virtue which delights in vigorous and beautiful thinking, just as moral virtue delights in vigorous and beautiful conduct.

—Philip Gilbert Hamerton.

T is a common fashion among persons whose opportunities of self-culture are limited, to excuse their ignorance on the plea of unfavourable surroundings, and especially of the difficulty of access to good books. To be without books is certainly a severe deprivation, but not so severe as to involve the complete sacrifice of the intellectual life. Nature herself affords such rich pasturage for the mind—"sermons in stones" and "books in the running brooks,"—that with eyes to see, and ears to hear, not one among us should complain of insuperable obstacles to our mental development.

A man who had never heard of Shakespeare would be considered very ignorant to-day, but it must not be forgotten that before Shakespeare's time, some of the wisest men the world has ever known earned immortal reputations which have not suffered from comparison with his. Any college student of our time enjoys educational advantages vastly superior to those which Socrates and Plato could command, yet how few take the same delight in "vigorous and beautiful thinking"

as did the ancient philosophers at whose feet the world still sits to learn wisdom. It is therefore no proof of a superior intellect to be familiar with the names and works of the greatest authors.

Intellectual power may exist without any such knowledge, and a refined taste can feed itself as well on the wonders of Nature, as on merely human masterpieces, and even, no doubt, a great deal better.

Your intellectual status can be pretty accurately gauged by the degree of interest and attention which you bestow on the beauties of Nature, and the workings of her laws.

If the greatest scholar or poet in the world should come to visit you he would not care about any of your book-lore, which he would already have learned by heart, but he would be greatly interested in learning from you some facts about the natural history of your neighbourhood, and any romantic or historical associations connected with it. If he should find you perfectly acquainted with every kind of flower and tree growing thereabouts, and with the habits of insects and birds, with the nature of the soil and the rocks, with the origin of every stream, and knowing accurately the best seasons and localities for taking interesting observations of various kinds, he would carry away with him a pleasant remembrance of every moment spent in your society, and a feeling of real respect for the resources of your mind.

Metaphysical speculation also offers an unlimited field for the exercise of the mental faculties. Meditation on the great problems of existence elevates the thoughts above low and common things, and prepares the mind for the intelligent discussion of philosophical subjects.

High thinking is generally the precursor of noble living, and this has frequently been exemplified within

the narrow walls of a hut as well as in the academic haunts of scholars or the palaces of princes. Do not, therefore, blame fate and your environment for the ignorance of which you are sometimes made to feel ashamed, but study the book of nature that lies open before your eyes, and when you shall have mastered it you will find yourself in possession of an amount of knowledge which will fit you for intercourse with the brightest minds you may chance to meet.



XIX

GOD'S GOOD GIFTS.

God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.

—Mrs. Browning.

WE find a singular satisfaction in counting our worldly possessions, and knowing, to the fraction of a cent, their precise value, whether intrinsic or relative. But we rarely think of the good gifts God has lavished on us, which are beyond price, and which, if we were rightly constituted, would in a great measure, if not completely, satisfy our wants and provide us with a deep and unfailing source of happiness. Try to enumerate them all, and you will find the list practically endless. But if you had no more than your five senses to be grateful for, are not these alone incomparably more precious than all the wealth of the Indies? What endless avenues of delight they open up to you! What a tremendous misfortune it would be to lose even one of them! Yet are we so much the slaves of habit and routine, that many of us cease to be conscious of the pure joy of living, and disregarding all real possibilities of happiness of which the germs are within us, waste our days pursuing shadows which we shall never overtake. As a powerful and pleasant antidote to the feelings of envy and jealousy which so frequently assail those who are not favorites of fortune, I strongly recommend the practice of counting up God's gifts. A little reflection will suffice to show that they do indeed "put man's best dreams to shame."

XX

REVENGE.

Womanlike, taking revenge too deep for a transient wrong. —“Maud.”

HE forgiveness of injuries seems to be the hardest lesson woman has to learn in the school of self-discipline. This is true not only where great wrongs are concerned; the smallest slight, unkindness, or apparent injustice rankles deep and long in the average woman's breast, and too frequently an opportunity for “paying off” the offender is eagerly looked for. A vindictive spirit is a most unfortunate defect of character, being a fruitful source of unhappiness as well to its possessor as to all who come in contact with her. It is, of course, incompatible with a high order of intelligence. The woman who reflects and reasons cannot fail to perceive that a resentful disposition is an effectual destroyer of peace, that no advantage is derived from it; but that by yielding to it she suffers a loss of charm and dignity which renders her both detestable and ridiculous in the eyes of others.

If, indeed, it is only too evident that she is being treated unfairly or with positive unkindness by others, she knows that there are at her disposal rational means of seeking an explanation of this unfriendly attitude. How often are lasting friendships founded on a frank and calm discussion of a real or fancied cause of quarrel! But oftener, discretion counsels silence, suggesting that many an apparent injury or affront is wholly unpremeditated or too trifling to be worthy of notice; also, that life is too short and precious to be

wasted in strife or contention, and that real sorrows and irreparable losses being inevitable, it is childish to expend on insignificant ones regrets disproportionate to their importance.

If it is womanlike to take

“revenge too deep for a transient wrong”

we must strive to unsex ourselves to the extent of refuting the poet’s accusation. Let us not be above appealing to masculine wisdom in cases open to doubt. The injury or affront which fails to impair the appetite or destroy the sleep of an affectionate parent, husband or brother can scarcely be as grievous as it at first appeared from a feminine point of view. It is wonderful how much happier and light-hearted one becomes as soon as the resolution is taken and acted upon of dismissing all thoughts of resentment and revenge, and betaking one’s self in moments of mental perturbation to some useful occupation or agreeable pastime. It is not precisely easy at first, no more than it is to ride a wheel or paint a picture, but with practice, the difficulties quickly vanish, and the exercise becomes a positive pleasure. Try it.



XXI

THE CHILD'S FIRST SCHOOL-ROOM.

The mother's heart is the child's school-room.

—H. W. Beecher.

T is a solemn thought, as well as a beautiful one. Not your conduct only, nor the words that fall from your lips, but the inner chamber of your heart, whose recesses you think secret from all, this is your child's school-room. The divine intuitions of infancy can pierce the most formidable barricade of the soul.

There is a challenge in the innocent, questioning look of a child which the eyes of the unworthy dare not meet, and when it is a mother who is unworthy—the pity of it! See, therefore, that the school-room is swept and garnished: that it is warm and bright with sunshine: that the atmosphere is sweet and pure and wholesome. Nothing must be permitted to enter there but what is good, or if inadvertently the seeds of some insidious disease are sown, make haste to purify and disinfect the school-room before the contagion spreads to the precious little ones. And even you who are not mothers, but who may some day be found worthy to be lifted to the holy state, take this motto also to yourselves.

To keep your heart "unspotted from the world" for the sake of a little child whose school-room it will be in some happy future time, is an aim worthy of all praise and honour, and which leads to the fulfilment of the highest womanly ideals.

XXII

THE NEAREST DUTY.

"Why look for duties through a telescope?" asked Conscience of a man consulting her. "I wish to see only the one beyond my reach," he replied.

—M. S. Beeson.

DISTANCE lends enchantment, truly. The fading past has its romance, the approaching future its mystery, but the present seems ever commonplace and irksome sometimes passing endurance. Who among us does not grow impatient at times, of the daily routine, the common task, the perpetual rolling of stones up-hill only to see them roll down again, calling for a fresh application of strength and energy. We sigh for change and cast envious glances over the boundaries of our own narrow existence into some wider and fairer provinces of human endeavour. We witness the triumphs of those who are prospering there, and are filled with the conviction of our own capacity for similar achievement.

If only the way were open, we think, how we should astonish the world! And in secret, we grieve with a quite pathetic sincerity, over the meanness of opportunity which supplies no adequate outlet for the slumbering heroism in our breasts. Alas! when the aspiring mortal, humored by Fate, is transplanted to the desired sphere, what happens? The glamour fades as he draws near, the rungs of the ladder leading to glory are found

to be wider apart than they seemed in the deceptive distance, and, too often, a backward glance reveals the tantalizing certainty that the real chances for heroic achievement have been left behind in the pursuit of a shadow.

It is thus that the most valuable opportunities of adolescence, like the purest joys of childhood, are, by the majority of human beings, recognized only in retrospect. It is a proof of the highest wisdom in the individual to be able to see at the start, his true place in the Creator's plan, and to shape his life accordingly, richly content to work in harmony with the designs of a Higher Intelligence than his own. Let us not waste any time, then, searching through a telescope for duties fitted to our capacity, but be satisfied to perform those which lie nearest our hand, and to do them with all our might.



XXIII

CAUSE AND EFFECT.

*Shallow men believe in luck, believe in circumstances.
....strong men believe in cause and effect.*

—Emerson.

AMONG the articles of faith most essential to success in life is a belief in one's own power to control circumstances. Trusting to luck, in nine cases out of ten, is deliberately to court failure. There are timid and indolent natures, to whom anything in the shape of an obstacle is a not unwelcome signal to turn back, to relinquish all further effort in a given direction. Needless to say, it is not among such that one may look hopefully for useful or honourable achievement of any kind. The sturdy soul, on the contrary, is ever prepared for opposition or hostility, and even enjoys having its own powers of determination and resistance put to the severest test. Like the skilful engineer who cuts his way through the very heart of the mountains, bridges the roaring torrent and treacherous chasm, hews down the forest and builds up the valley to make a short, sure road to his distant goal, so the valiant spirit meets the chances and changes of fortune with unmoved serenity, accepting each new rebuff or defeat as an invitation to still greater exertion.

To attribute the successes of others to luck, is to accuse one's self either of a defect of intelligence, or of an envious reluctance to acknowledge their superior

merit or ability. With rare exceptions, the man or woman who wins in the race of life, does so through strenuous effort or through the inborn capacity that renders effort superfluous. Their so-called "luck" is easily explicable if traced back to its source. Sometimes so slight a thing as a graceful action, a courteous reply, a neat appearance, or any equally trifling indication of honesty, courage, punctuality, magnanimity, or other desirable qualification, becomes the pivot on which success turns. Can this be called luck? Has it not taken years of perseverance, of self-control, to acquire the habit or the virtue in question? Might not any other person have achieved as much by trying equally hard?

A man dies suddenly, and his junior officer is promoted to fill his place. "Lucky fellow!" say those of the grade from which he has risen. Were they more generous they would say, "It is a just appointment; he deserves it." They do not care to admit that his superior qualifications immediately recommended him to his employers as the right man to fill the vacant place.

A girl makes a brilliant marriage, and her friends wonder why she should have been so much luckier than they? Her husband came among them all, heart-free. All had equal chances in his eyes. In the girl of his choice he must have discovered some special charm, some higher attraction than he had perceived in any other he had hitherto met. Give her the credit due to her. She knew best how to please. There was no question of "luck" at all.

One mother brings up a family of healthy, intelligent, docile children, who, as they go their separate ways in life, prove a credit to themselves and to her. Another is bowed down with the shame and sorrow of having reared sons to dishonour their father's name.

She wonders despairingly why the first has had better luck than herself. Would it not be kinder and fairer to admit in all humility that the successful mother is the one who understood her duties best and applied herself most strenuously to their fulfilment?

Two girls are thrown penniless on the world. One becomes a burden to herself and her friends, forever bemoaning her fate, and making half-hearted, fruitless attempts to secure her independence. The other goes resolutely to work to find a secure foothold, and before long you hear of her filling some position of trust and quietly settling down into her new sphere of usefulness with the determination to adorn it as best she can. One is not luckier than the other. She is simply braver, more steadfast and persevering.

If we want luck," we may all have it if we are willing to work hard enough to secure and keep it. Let the world that knows nothing of our labours and self-denial marvel at our good fortune. We shall personally have the deep satisfaction of recognizing in the measure of success we may achieve, the reward of our ability and honest endeavours.



XXIV

PROVOCATION.

To be able to bear provocation is an argument of great reason, and to forgive it of a great mind.

—Tillotson.

PROVOCATION is regarded by the average human being as a quite sufficient excuse for an ebullition of temper. One would like to ask of the man or woman who reasons in this way : “ Is there any merit in keeping one’s temper when one is not provoked to anger ? ”

Virtue is proven, not by immunity from temptation, but by the invulnerable front it presents to the fiercest attacks of the tempter. You would not praise a hermit for maintaining an habitual serenity of mind, since no one comes to disturb or interfere with him. A blind man gets no credit for remaining unmoved when an unfeeling person mocks him with an insulting gesture.

No one can claim to be perfectly honest who has never, in the moment of extreme need, been confronted with a favourable opportunity for possessing himself of the property of another.

Until one has wrestled victoriously with the same temptations that have assailed and overcome a fallen brother or sister, it is rash to assume that one is their superior in virtue.

Provocation is the only real test of patience, of the kind heart, and the reasonable mind. It is when the

enemy is lying in wait, to torment and exasperate you, that you need to be most wary, to keep a cool head and to put a bridle on your tongue. To yield to a feeling of irritation caused by a thoughtless, or even a malicious word or act, is to abdicate the throne of reason and become the slave of ignoble passion.

The true Christian attitude towards one who seeks to annoy us, is one of pity for a soul darkened by unworthy sentiments and warped by mean motives. Whenever we come in contact with an inferior nature, the obligation is laid on us of revealing by example the beauty and charm of a higher one.

This end is easily secured by the "soft answer," or by a discreet silence, or an adroit change of subject. An effectual reply to a sneer, a taunt or a reproach may take the form of a good-natured admission that it is deserved. This removes the possibility of argument or recrimination, and affords an opportunity for diverting attention to some other topic. With practice one may become quite as expert in parrying a thrust as an ill-natured person is in dealing it. It is an art and an accomplishment well worth acquiring.

While reason suffices to make provocation harmless, a great mind goes farther still, and freely forgives the author of it. This is not so difficult when we bear in mind that there are moral as well as physical infirmities and deformities. It is scarcely consistent to expend all our sympathies on the lame, the blind and the deaf, and keep none for the narrow-minded, the jealous, and those who are obviously incapable of noble, generous or refined sentiments. The eyes of the soul are often blinded in youth, by prejudice, or inherited predilections. The heart contracted by selfishness, covetousness, or distrust is deaf to all appeals for affection, mercy, gentleness. We owe some consideration to those who are so afflicted, and when they falter or

stumble on the way, it is our part to help them forward, by word or example, as we would lead a blind man from a threatened danger which his infirmity prevents him from suspecting.

To forgive the mistakes of others, even though we have suffered from them becomes easy enough when we have learned to view them in the light of true charity. Readily enough then can we repeat the dying Saviour's prayer for His persecutors : "Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they do."



XXV

A RICH INHERITANCE.

They are rich who possess God, but they are richest who possess nothing but God. All creation belongs to him to whom God is his sole possession.

—F. W. Faber.

FROM the lips of a little child I learned a lesson once which has left an indelible impression on my mind. The passage above quoted recalls this incident. We were walking along one of the lovely paths that thread the more secluded portions of our beautiful Mount Royal. It was a day in early summer. There was a delicious mildness and freshness in the air. Spring's tender green was still on every leaf, and wild flowers blossomed about our feet in generous profusion. My little companion, though not yet five years old, was keenly alive to the charms of the surroundings, and clapped her hands for joy as we penetrated further and further into the sweet solitudes of the mountain side. Suddenly she stopped and asked me eagerly : "Who does the Mountain belong to?" After a moment's pause, I answered : "To you, my darling." I shall never forget the look of rapturous incredulity on the baby face. "To me!" she repeated ; "is it my Mountain?" "Yes, dear," I replied, "God gave it to you for a playground." "Oh, isn't He good?" she exclaimed impulsively, and with a wholly new interest in the fair scene before us, she silently studied the trees, the rocks, and the sweet flowers blooming at our feet.

I, too, was silent, and asked myself if, indeed, I shared the love and gratitude of the child towards the Creator for the great and wonderful possessions He had made mine.

Alas! when we cease to be children, we cease, too often, to care about the gifts of God. The treasures of the fields and woods appeal to us no longer. Our hearts are filled so full of greed for the common things that pass away, there is no room in them for the sincere enjoyment of the eternally good and beautiful. We take no delight in the marvellous manifestations of divine power and beneficence that enrich our great dwelling-place and play-ground, the earth, because we are too much occupied in cramming as many objects as we can lay hold of within the four walls we call our home. Our idea of contentment, of success in life, goes not much further than the possession of countless things, which, once within our reach, we discover to be absolutely useless, if not cumbrous, appurtenances. It is in the crucial moments of life that our various belongings stand revealed at their true worth or worthlessness. When the heart is swayed by any strong emotion, love, grief, resentment, pity or noble enthusiasm, the only influences that can attune themselves to the soul and fill it with peace, comfort, or serenity, are those that our Mother Nature wields in her own sanctuaries away from all the artificial restrictions and complications of conventional life. But such influences are withheld from those who have habitually ignored or despised them. We cannot "possess God" by a mere momentary impulse of will. We must first dispossess ourselves of all that is useless and unworthy of our solicitude. When we can truly say that we are satisfied with Him alone, we will realize with more than common thankfulness that all creation belongs to us.

XXVI

THE MOTIVE POWER OF LOVE.

Love is a higher intellectual exercise than hatred.

—Thackeray.

JUST as the infinite love of the Creator for the works of His hands is a corollary of the divine omniscience, so the human capacity for loving corresponds with the degree of knowledge attained by each individual. So great a perfection resides in every created thing, however humble, so marvellous is the fitness of each for the functions assigned to it, so inestimable its value in its relation to its surroundings, that a knowledge of the same cannot fail to inspire the intelligent observer with those mingled sentiments of deep admiration, interest, curiosity, and sympathy, which constitute love.

Hatred, on the other hand, is equivalent to a confession of ignorance. It is a senseless negation, a denial of the inherent good in persons and things ; a revelation of the contracted horizon which bounds the hater's mental vision. One feels the futility of appealing from the verdict of a hater. He hates because he knows no better, because of some blind instinct of self-defence which awakens within him when he is brought in contact with superior strength or skill. Sometimes it is merely the sense of being baffled by the unknown or unknowable—someone or somewhat that he cannot understand, and therefore fears, dislikes or distrusts. Ignorant persons frankly confess to “ hating ” men and

women to whom they have never spoken a word, and who have never harmed them ever so slightly, simply on the grounds of some physical peculiarity or eccentricity of manner which irritates by its singularity. The trained observation is not similarly affected, for the reason that it is accustomed to refer all things to their causes, and the natural aversion to the abnormal is submerged in the interesting mental process of inquiring into its wherefore.

Thus the most unsightly wound, the most repellent evidence of disease, possess for the student of medicine a scientific interest which completely effaces the disagreeable impression first produced by the spectacle. There would be no horror in such sights for any of us could we look at them understandingly. It is because we are ignorant of the reason of their being that we shudder at the mere mention of them. That we are all susceptible to the influence of knowledge to the extent of being made to love things that we once hated is proved by some part of the experience of nearly every human being. As our knowledge of things and persons increases, our capacity for loving widens and deepens. Every wife and mother, for instance, learns to conquer old aversions and repugnances in the discharge of her domestic duties. The dainty maiden who once shrank from contact with an unwashed child, marries, and ends by cheerfully performing the most menial services for half a dozen little denizens of the nursery. Another, to whom the atmosphere of the sick room is "depressing," the duties of a nurse unthinkable, ultimately finds her highest happiness in ministering to suffering humanity in a hospital ward.

It is then sufficiently clear that whatever or whoever is knowable is also in a certain degree loveable, and it is reasonable to conclude that what we do not love, we do not know.

This view is as consoling to a troubled heart as it is acceptable to a philosophic mind. It converts what was once an object of hatred into one of mystery, merely, from which the former element of irritation is removed. Even a declared enemy, who robs and despoils, persecutes and calumniates one, becomes a psychological study of surpassing interest rather than a target for useless vituperation, or a subject for ignoble revenge.

The sublime passion for knowledge, having its source and ultimate end in the eternal and infinite, inevitably submerges every temporary or private interest, and lifts him who is possessed by it to a plane of thought and feeling in which no pettiness or selfishness can survive. All who attain this level enjoy a god-like immunity from common, trivial cares, a serene sense of lasting separation from whatever is base and ignobly disquieting. In knowing and loving, their noblest attributes find adequate expression, their most passionate desires, complete fulfilment.

Into these rarified regions we are all privileged to penetrate, and there we may dwell our lives long at peace with ourselves and with every other. Yet there are always some who find the height too steep to scale, and who are weakly content to dwell in the darksome vale below where ignorance, contention and hatred abound, where true love, knowledge and joy are things unknown.

XXVII

ON THE HEIGHTS.

Peopled and warm is the valley, lonely and chill the height,

But the peak that is nearer the storm-cloud, is nearer the stars of light.

—Selected.

MANY men and women, conscious of a call to a higher life than the one they are leading, lack the necessary courage and firmness to break away from old habits and associations, to set their feet in new, untried paths, and, unsupported by the sympathy of human companionship, to attempt to scale the somewhat forbidding heights that lead to the desired goal. Looking at virtue in the abstract, it seems eminently beautiful, desirable and attainable by a mere effort of the will. In hours of solitude, meditation and prayer, it is easy enough to assume the mantle of holiness, to shudder at the thought of sin, to spurn temptation and to draw up a rule of life which would not discredit an angel. But, in practice, the average human being finds that the pursuit of the higher life involves numerous and painful struggles with nature, separates him more or less from others of his kind, and shuts off many comforting sources of sympathy and support.

It is not given to every one to stand alone on the chill height of Duty without casting backward and regretful glances on the warm peopled valley, called Do-As-You-

Please. Down there, familiar forms are gathered together in friendly comradeship, eating, drinking and making merry. They seem to have no care for the lonely climber of the heights, or, if they look his way at all, it is with a curious disdain. Few, even among those who loved him best, are willing to follow him into those cold upper regions. He must perforce press on alone. Sometimes, indeed, he turns and falters. A hand he loves beckons to him from below. It would be so easy and so sweet to retrace his footsteps, to seek the warm shelter that awaits him there, to relinquish all further effort, to be satisfied with the common level of virtue attained by the great majority. But before yielding to the fatal temptation, his eyes once more seek the heights, and lo! they are crowned with stars of light that shed a divine effulgence on the towering peaks. His heart quickens within him. The spell of common things is broken. The mystery, the grandeur of the eternal enthrals his spirit anew and give wings to his feet. He is saved.

But the same struggle repeats itself over and over to the end. Storm-clouds intervene between him and the heavenly vision that beckoned him on, and at such times his wistful glance strays down to the valley, and something within him urges him to go back. Many a traveller, weary and faint-hearted, thus returns to rise no more to the same heights. Only the dauntless few arrive at last on the Alpine summit known as Final Perseverance. And even from that glorious eminence, if they look with pity on the lower worlds they have forsaken, it is often with the pity that is akin to love. The merely human in us dies hard. We are loth to let go of hands that hold our own in a warm and friendly clasp—to forsake the companionable fireside, and set out alone on a dark and solitary road.

But this is life, indeed, and we are powerless to order

it otherwise. Happily, the hope sustains us, through the never-ending struggle, that our earth is merely the vestibule of heaven, and that in the greater life beyond all uncertainty shall be changed into certainty, promise into fulfilment, and mutability into the permanence of everlasting happiness.



XXVIII

SEARCHING FOR PEARLS.

*Errors, like straws, upon the surface flow,
He who would search for pearls must dive below.*

—Addison.

BECAUSE of a certain quickness in detecting flaws and shortcomings where others discern perfection, or a near approach to it, there are persons who flatter themselves that they are endowed with superior wisdom, which it is their pleasure and duty to disseminate among their too trusting neighbours. They delight in pointing out the clay feet of other folks' idols : they shake their heads and smile pityingly when anyone ventures, in their presence, to express unstinted admiration, or enthusiasm for any object, cause or person whatever. To them, nothing or no one is wholly good or worthy of respect. In this *nil admirari* attitude they go through life, deriving little pleasure or benefit from any source, and grudging the satisfaction which more generous natures reap from a willingness to give honour and credit where both are due.

As a matter of fact, it is the superficial observer who sees only the defective side of an object or of human character, and fails to discern the true value that lies hidden beneath a deceptive exterior. No remarkable degree of insight is required to detect errors that float like straws on the surface of a stream. But he whose

mental gaze penetrates to the deep below, and who—like a diver—can discern pearls in the very slime of the river-bed, is the one whose judgment of men and things is to be respected.

Do you remember that beautiful legend of the Christ which relates how, one day, a dead dog lying in the street in Judea evoked expressions of contempt and disgust from all the passers-by. One called attention to his draggled coat, another to his sightless eyes, another to the flies that swarmed round his open mouth, a fourth to the stench that arose from his decaying body. Suddenly One stood in their midst, who, looking with compassion on the offending beast, said with infinite gentleness, in a voice divinely sweet, “Pearls are not equal to the whiteness of his teeth.”

The carping crowd was silenced, and each man went his way musing on the lesson that had been conveyed in those simple words pronounced by Jesus of Nazareth, for all knew that none other could have spoken them.

The habit of criticising and fault-finding is easier to acquire than that of bestowing a just appreciation where it is due ; but with the right dispositions, the latter may be cultivated until it becomes a second nature. Once acquired, it becomes to the possessor a source of positive happiness of a kind which remains for ever unknown to the captious critic who has eyes only for errors and flaws, and who thereby misses all the beauty and goodness that exist in the world. It also becomes a power for good, by diffusing hope and courage in timid breasts, and inspiring affection and gratitude in hearts that would, failing such help, be heavy with misgivings or resentment. No weapon is more effectual for the disarming of hostility than a word of praise or appreciation judiciously bestowed. No moral stimulus acts more powerfully on the human soul than the desire to live up to the high estimate formed of it by others.

When you think little of a fellow-creature and his work, and permit him to see it, you thereby diminish his incentive to improvement, and relegate him, perhaps permanently, to an inferior status. Show him, on the contrary, that you respect his motives, that you believe in his capacity to overcome the difficulties lying in his path, that you recognize the good that is in him, and you have helped him to brace himself for a fresh effort, you have brightened his outlook, and perhaps given him a foothold that will ultimately lead him to the highest point of success.

When we are tempted to repine because we lack the means to relieve the material necessities of our poorer neighbours, it is well to pause and ask ourselves how we are dispensing that richer store of love, sympathy and kindly encouragement which is locked up in our own breasts. There is always somebody quite close to us—sister, brother, husband, parent, child or friend, who needs them.



XXIX

THE PERFECT ROSE.

A hundred different and sweet smelling leaves are needed to form a rose, and the hundreds of pure joys go to make up perfect happiness. —Carmen Sylva.

 ONE lovely pink petal lies in your path. Only one. It was dropped from a rose that some one carried carelessly. Do you pass it by, unheeding, trampling it ruthlessly under foot, perhaps, or do you stoop to pick it up, lay it tenderly in your palm, and contemplate its exquisite beauty. Surely you can spare a moment to feast your eyes on the lovely, delicate colour ; to note the fine curving outline, the velvety, cool surface, the heavenly fragrance it exhales. No human hand ever fashioned anything so rarely perfect as this. As you gaze you are filled with wonder and delight, with humility and reverence. This little piece of God's handiwork brings you so close to Him ! You wonder how any one could ever doubt His infinite power, His love, His very existence.

Just one little petal that will never be missed from the hundred that make up the perfect rose, but to you who look upon it with seeing eyes, it comes as a message straight from Him who made it, and you will go your way cheered and strengthened because of that fragment of beauty, of divinity—almost—which you picked out of the dust because you knew its value and did not despise the chance of pure joy which a moment's attention to it could not fail to bring you.

In the same manner, every day and all day long, joy waits upon our footsteps, lurking in unexpected places,

gleaming like a ray of light here, radiant like a rose there ; now emitting a delicious perfume, again saluting our ears with a sweet sound, caressing our cheek with a touch of divine tenderness or irradiating our heart with an unlooked-for happiness. It may be the glory of a sunset or the unfolding of a leaf, the song of a bird or the freshness of a breeze ; the light of love in the eyes of a friend ; a word of praise from one placed over us ; it may be a task accomplished, a doubt removed, a prayer answered. For, Proteus-like, joy is ever changing its shape, and has as many varying aspects as there are moments in time or moods in human hearts. But one thing we know beyond all peradventure. It is ever with us and do we but choose to look for it we can not fail to find it.

Yet there are malecontents who care nothing for the petal, and are ever clamouring for the perfect rose. Their eyes see only the joys that dazzle, their hearts take no account of happiness save such as makes them objects of envy to the whole world. How poor is the life that rejects all the minor chances of happiness while watching and waiting for the great prizes of earthly existence. To lose these, then, is to lose everything. But no kind or degree of sorrow, suffering, deprivation or disappointment has power to overwhelm the soul that is wont to accept in glad and thankful spirit, the "hundred pure joys that go to make up perfect happiness."

This is what we must strive for, therefore, the superior insight, the trust, the love that will help us to recognize the beneficent designs of Providence, and to rejoice in all the manifestations of Divine love and power that enrich the world. This is the only way in which we can secure to ourselves a lasting immunity from the disquiet and endless longings of dissatisfied souls.

XXX

THE MILDEW OF MONOTONY.

The mildew of monotony destroys the keenest pleasure.
—Sir Herbert Maxwell.

TO the hungry and sick and sorrowing ones of earth it must appear well-nigh incredible that the conditions which would bring them permanent relief from their troubles, become, at times, so irksome to those with whom they are normal, as to appear well-nigh intolerable. The starving wretch at the palace gate cannot conceive the satiety of the prince ; the helpless cripple believes that earth would be a paradise indeed, if he could but walk and be strong ; the pale mourner beside the grave of a loved one feels passionate envy of the lot of her whose circle of beloved ones remains unbroken ; yet, so curiously constituted is human nature that possession of a coveted object, or fulfilment of the most ardently desired hope, soon converts the most intense longing into a placid, if not indifferent acceptance of the greatest favours and blessings.

The most discontented persons in the world are found among those who have never experienced the sensation of hunger, who are in full possession of their health and faculties, and whom the greater sorrows of life have passed by untouched. The cause of their dissatisfaction is simply a weariness of what, in the estimation of some, might be regarded as ideal conditions. The

mildew of monotony has fallen upon their pleasures and destroyed them.

It is useless to blame or denounce this universal human liability to chafe under too long a continuance of even the greatest blessings. It is there and it cannot be disposed of by words of censure or remonstrance.

The wiser plan is to regard its signs as symptoms of a diseased condition of the mind, calling for tender care and judicious treatment.

As in the case of other maladies, prevention is better than cure, but oftenest, the effects of monotony on the human subject are not apprehended or suspected until they have made inroads on the patient's mental constitution which only the most summary and powerful measures can effectually resist.

The "mildew of monotony" is responsible for a greater number of wrecked souls and desolate homes than may be traced to any other malign influence that militates against the security of individual or domestic happiness. No power is more insidiously effectual in alienating the affections of husbands from their wives, of children from their parents. To escape from its influence how many young men and maidens yearly take the broad and flowery path that leads to destruction, how many husbands and wives forget the solemn vows made at the altar, how many rash unions are formed, and loving ties thoughtlessly sundered?

The magic prescription for the malady produced by monotony is "change." It is wonderful how persistently some persons set their faces against the merest suggestion of change in the home. They insist on the same programme, week in, week out. They keep the same hours, eat the same food, wear the same kind of clothes, express the same opinions year after year. The slightest attempt to introduce an innovation on the part of any member of the family is met with a determined

resistance. "We have never done it before, why should we begin now?" is supposed to settle the question beyond all dispute.

The world would soon come to a standstill if peopled entirely by such narrow-minded, unprogressive and selfish tyrants.

In a hundred little ways it is possible to vary the monotony of home life without upsetting the established order of things to any serious extent. The wise woman, perceiving little signs of dissatisfaction in her husband or children, makes a duty of planning some pleasant diversion or change of routine which awakens new interest and distracts attention from recognized causes of irritation.

In one family that I know, the announcement that every one may sleep late the next morning, if so inclined, puts the whole household in the highest good humour. Of course a holiday is chosen for this little indulgence.

Special privileges granted now to one, now to another child, "just for a change," have a wonderful effect in brightening up the spirits of the young people, and reconciling them to the disagreeable tasks of life. To promote the general comfort of the home, it is necessary that certain restraints be put upon the individual inclinations of separate members of the family, but it is of equal importance that such restrictions be removed at intervals to counteract the cramping influence they would otherwise exercise on the mind and character.

A man, especially, is apt to feel at times, a strong desire, almost a need, to break away from his usual routine and enlarge his experience of life by contact with some of its less familiar aspects. There are wives who deeply resent such a disposition on the part of their husbands and who take no pains to conceal their displeasure over the least evidence of it. On the other

hand, there are not a few husbands of the crank species who are intolerant of change, declining to recognize that the average woman's natural cravings for a little pleasurable excitement now and then, are not wholly satisfied by her daily privilege of ordering his dinner, sewing on his buttons, and studying the back of his head while he peruses the evening papers.

An occasional effort of unselfishness all around is needed to keep the mildew of monotony from settling on the pleasures of the home.



XXXI

RELATIVE VALUES.

*May no one be able to say of us that we are too busy
to be kind.*

—Selected.

WHATEVER be our limitations in other directions, there are few among us who have not acquired a fatal facility in the art of excusing ourselves from the performance of certain important duties. The validity of our excuses is, as a rule, less obvious to others than to ourselves. When we say, in explanation of some regrettable omission of an expected kindness or courtesy, "I was too busy to attend to the matter," we may, in a measure, salve our own conscience with the conventional plea, but we seldom succeed in impressing our hearers with the sincerity of our statement. The weakness of the argument lies in the fact that, too often, when we believe ourselves very "busy," we are expending time and energy on objects less worthy of our attention than those we are neglecting. The relative importance of the various claims on our affection and interest that arise from day to day, should be carefully weighed in our mind before any are dismissed on the plea that we lack the time to consider them. Unhappily we are often so much the slaves of circumstances, so blinded by vanity, selfishness, and foolish ambition, that we fail to discern the true values of apparently conflicting duties, and thus we choose to

devote ourselves to those of lesser importance, while the greater ones suffer neglect at our hands. Some day we are sharply awakened to the truth by the sudden snatching from us of the opportunities we so long failed to profit by. Thenceforth we are haunted by bitter regrets and self-accusings that come too late to bear useful fruit. How cruelly do our empty excuses mock us, for instance, in the hour of bereavement, when one whom we dearly loved has passed for ever beyond the reach of our help or sympathy! We had not time to be kind—to pay the expected visit, or write the promised letter—alas! we have time enough, when too late, to weep useless tears and upbraid our own hearts with ceaseless self-reproachings.

It is well, then, when tempted to evade the claims of any who love and trust us, with the excuse that we are "too busy" to question ourselves seriously as to the true value of the efforts we are engaged in, and to ascertain whether our eagerness to succeed in certain directions is prompted by an unworthy or a legitimate ambition. Are we striving for great and permanent results, or only for those that are in their nature trifling and transitory? Are we suffering our hearts to be drawn away from the sacred and beautiful obligations of kinship or old affection, in the empty pursuit of some will-o'-the-wisp of success, pleasure or fame?

This life is indeed too short to permit the accomplishment of all that we would do for ourselves and others, and there must be times when superior obligations hinder us from assuming others of less importance. The solemn duty laid on us is to learn to distinguish between the real and the apparent claims on our time and energies, to dismiss as idle those which have their foundation in vanity and selfishness, to apply ourselves seriously and steadfastly to the securing of such aims as will increase the happiness and welfare of others,

reflect honour on our own hearts, and be to us a comfort in days of sorrow and trial. With this lofty purpose before us, we shall indeed lead useful and busy lives, but they shall be so well-ordered that time will always be found to be kind as well as busy.



XXXII

SELF-COMPLACENCY.

A man who cannot mind his own business is not to be trusted with the king's.

—Saville.

IT is no uncommon sight in this world of mysteries and anomalies to see men and women who have been notoriously unsuccessful in the management of their own affairs, assuming, without hesitation and even with alacrity, responsibilities of the most serious character, which, neither by experience, education nor inherent ability, they are in any sense fitted to discharge in a manner profitable to others or creditable to themselves.

There are practically no limits to the self-complacency which is the usual accompaniment of certain kinds of ignorance, of which the worst is probably that which results from a superficial knowledge of things. The spectacle of fools rushing in where angels fear to tread, appeals in a good many instances, to one's sense of humour, but often, too, by reason of the earnest though misguided zeal of those who insist on playing such a sorry part, it becomes pathetic. In any case, the consequences are wholly mischievous if not positively disastrous to all concerned.

The injury that is constantly worked to good causes by the mistakes of fervent but ill-advised champions of the same, is simply incalculable. Of course, only a rare degree of modesty will reveal to a man his own unfitness for particular roles, or will persuade him that he can best help on a cause by refraining from identi-

fying himself with it in any way. Women, too, as a rule, are lacking in the commendable diffidence which arises from a recognition of their own shortcomings.

The freedom which is now enjoyed by our sex in the matter of participation in affairs outside the home has multiplied the temptations that delude mediocrity with their dazzling promises of easily-won triumphs in one or another province of effort hitherto untried. We must needs be on our guard against the flattering illusions through which we see ourselves occupying a position of prominence in some sphere outside our own accustomed one. Especially should we cultivate humility with regard to our special fitness for work that has a professedly religious or philanthropic object. A sudden access of zeal counts for nothing in the matter of equipment for a new function. Enthusiasm is the first lamp that goes out on a difficult road. Before presuming to teach, exhort, guide or govern others, let us ask ourselves a few questions. Am I worthy? Does my own life bear testimony to the sincerity of my convictions? Have I earned the respect, the admiration, the affection of those who know me best, and therefore most truly? Are my own personal affairs in such a successful condition as to inspire confidence in my ability to accomplish greater things?

Honest replies to questions like these should determine the course one ought to pursue when in doubt as to the wisdom of launching into a new field of effort. And if the verdict of conscience is unfavourable to one's self, the only rational and dignified course open to one is humbly and faithfully to apply one's self to the performance of the modest duties of one's station, content to achieve perfection in small things rather than court failure in those beyond one's capacity.

XXXIII

THE IMPERATIVE DUTY.

We must ever be trying to know more and more what are the things to be believed and done.

—W. E. Gladstone.

If one would live a well-ordered and happy life, it is of primary importance to realize exactly what one's place is in the world, and how best one can fit one's self for the duties one is expected to perform in it. Many women waste valuable years between their youth and maturity, waiting, like Mr. Micawber, for something to turn up. Others, even when their life work has been plainly marked out for them, put no heart into their tasks, because their lines have not fallen in pleasant places. Their eyes are always wistfully straying into paths which their feet can never tread. Happily, examples are not rare, of the really sensible and capable woman who determines to make her life a success, no matter how scanty the materials at her command. If she can be no more than an instrument in the hands of others, she sees to it that the instrument is well constructed, always in order, and warranted to give perfect satisfaction.

If she is placed in authority, she makes those under her glad of her sway, so wisely, yet so gently, does she exercise it for the good of all. One definite aim is always before her eyes, and she moves straight for it, heedless of interruption or hindrance.

Every year of her life is represented by some useful achievement, some forward step in the direction of knowledge or virtue, or philanthropic effort. For her there are no regrets over golden opportunities missed, and, better still, so deep is the satisfaction that springs from the consciousness of duties faithfully performed, that she feels no jealousy of the performances or rewards of others. There is no room for envy or any kind of bitterness in a heart that is filled with the joy of doing, and doing well. There may be,—indeed, in a noble-minded woman's soul there must be—some longings that will ever remain unsatisfied, some lofty ideals unattained, but these only serve as a beacon of hope and an inspiration, not as an excuse for vain repinings, and unfaithfulness to other claims. They keep alive in her breast a laudable ambition to prove worthy of the highest honour that may come to her, but pending the happy time that may mean release from irksome conditions, she is bravely determined to make the best of those conditions, and is often astonished to find how much real satisfaction they can be made to yield her. So, though she may be neither lucky nor rich, in the common acceptance of those terms, she is envied by many who come under both categories, because she is busier, happier, and more resourceful than they. If young girls could realize the importance of discovering early in life, "what are the things to be believed and done," they would suffer no temptation to come between them and the faithful performance of their plain duty. The fruits of perseverance, after a short trial, will convince them that this is one of the simplest and surest methods of attaining happiness, and, of earning the respect and good-will of their fellow-creatures.

XXXIV

JEALOUSY.

*—trifles, light as air,
Are to the jealous confirmation strong
As proofs of Holy Writ.*

—Othello.

J EALOUSY is the thorn on the rose of love. Even while the beauty and perfume of the flower are filling the eyes and the heart with gladness the unsuspected thorn pierces the tender flesh and leaves it bleeding, and quivering with pain unspeakable. The wound is one that heals slowly, if at all. Sometimes the soreness remains through life, and oh, the pain of it! It is like the torment of a lost soul that has gained a glimpse of Heaven and then been hurled into outer darkness. The radiant and triumphant happiness of a heart revelling in undisturbed possession of a love most highly prized is on a sudden changed to bitter disappointment, to an overwhelming sense of injury, defeat and humiliation. Under the influence of jealousy the gentlest souls become the most implacable, and in an undisciplined nature its effects are indeed terrible. The daily press teems with the tragedies brought about by the workings of this devouring passion. Few are safe from its ravages, for if some escape its actual pangs, they are all the more likely to be objects of jealousy on the part of others and thus voluntarily or not to be drawn into complications more or less disturbing, if not positively dangerous.

It is useless to reason with a jealous person. The feeling is too deeply rooted in the heart to yield to argument. Pride and generosity may help to conceal and control it, but no power on earth can wholly eradicate it. Therefore we should be very kind and patient with the jealous, not severe or scornful. Because of their weakness we should show them an increasing tenderness and refrain from the least word or act that might disturb their trust in a beloved one. Is it not better to sacrifice an hour's amusement or the vanity of some idle conquest, than, for the sake of such an empty satisfaction, to inflict lasting pain on the loving and faithful heart of a wife, husband or lover ?

In the less serious relations of life, however, jealousy is a purely detestable fault, and one which may and must be corrected if one would win the respect and good-will of one's fellow-creatures. The woman who hates another merely because that other is her superior, morally, socially or intellectually ; who is irritated by the prosperity or popularity of her neighbours ; who perpetually accuses her acquaintances and friends of neglecting and slighting her ; who even attributes their proffered hospitalities to a spirit of ostentation : who is never thankful for a small kindness, but always covetous of greater ones—such a woman is less a subject for pity than contempt and dislike.

There is nothing more ridiculous and undignified than an attitude of resentment towards the society of which one is a member. If one is lovable, one will be loved, and if the contrary is true, the fault is in one's self, not in those who have a perfect right to avoid disagreeable or tiresome persons. The less one advertises one's own unpopularity, the better. Instead, therefore, of looking for causes of offence in "trifles light as air," a sensible woman, recognizing the deficiencies in her own character, or the drawbacks of

her position, accepts the fact that she was not born to shine like those who are more fortunately situated. Having reached this point of view she will be a thousand times happier than if she allows her existence to be soured by constantly reflecting on the superior advantages of her neighbour. The double resolution to refrain from exciting jealousy in loving hearts, and to reject its suggestions in the ordinary relations of life, is one that, faithfully followed, will be productive of much happiness to ourselves and others.



XXXV

PERSEVERANCE.

*Shalt thou be faint-hearted and turn from the strife,
From the mighty arena where all that is grand
And devoted and pure and adorning in life,
Is for high-hearted spirits like thine to command ?*

—Moore.

MUCH has been written about the isolation of royalty and of genius, that terrible loneliness which falls to one who has no equals among his fellows, none with whom he can speak familiarly, who are competent to counsel him in difficulties, or to sympathise with his high aspirations. This condition is not confined to royalty ; it governs to a certain extent the life of every man or woman whose ideals are loftier and motives purer than those of his or her daily associates. When we are young, enthusiasm keeps the heart warm and strengthens the soul for its constant warfare against the impulses of our lower nature. It is not hard in the darkest hour of temptation to follow the pillar of fire that faith and hope sends on before us to light the way, but after some years of conflict and many disenchantments, our hold on our ideal, our belief in human goodness, grows weaker. Some day, we droop and faint beneath the burden we once so joyfully assumed, and ask ourselves, " Is it worth while to carry it any longer ? "

Well for us if in an hour of such despondency, some

friendly remonstrance like the one quoted above is recalled to our mind. Shall we be faint-hearted and turn from "all that is grand," because on every side we see others too weak or too cowardly to keep up the fight? It would be a poor reason, surely, and unworthy of "high-hearted spirits, fit to command." Rather let us keep in view the power it is given us to wield and the responsibility that goes wth power. Every individual, however humble, exercises power in a certain degree over some other, who in a particular sense is his or her inferior. The cook and the kitchen-maid queen it over their respective realms as surely as the lady in her drawing-room, or the sovereign on the throne. The highest ambition of each should be to know her kingdom and to rule it wisely that she may be beloved and honoured by those who depend on her.



XXXVI

NATURE'S HEALING TOUCH.

It is impossible to walk across so much as a rood of the natural earth with mind unagitated and rightly poised, without receiving strength from some stone, flower, leaf, or sound, nor without a sense as of a dew falling on you out of the sky.

—Samuel Johnson.

WE are for the most part unresponsive to the influences that bear upon us unceasingly through the medium of the external world. This is because we seldom walk abroad “with mind unagitated and rightly poised.” We are vexed with trivial cares, elated over some petty triumph, apathetic because of the dull monotony of our existence, consumed with restless ambition, or absorbed in some great gratification. Under these conditions, we walk with unseeing eyes amidst the loveliest scenes, or seeing, we are not moved, discovering no relation between these things and the subject uppermost in our thoughts. We are wrapped in a mantle of selfishness which is impervious to all sweetness, beauty and light.

Yet, by a slight effort, it is possible to detach the mind from purely personal concerns, and to leave it open to the blessed influence of nature. No one can feel poor in the sense of possession that comes from looking at mountain, sky, tree, and river, with appreciative eyes. The beauty of them is ours ; while we

are free to gaze upon their loveliness, no one can rob us of that inestimable birthright. We need no bit of yellow parchment locked away in a strong box to prove our ownership ; a man may collect title-deeds by the score, but he can never have more than one pair of eyes ; therefore, he receives no richer impressions from Nature's splendid panoramas than do I who, having no legal right to a rood, claim the whole earth as my inheritance.

Looking back over past years have we not all cause to regret the time we have wasted planning for idle ends, and grieving over ephemeral troubles. But who ever repents of the days spent near the heart of nature, in the woods, on the mountain-top, or by the sea ?

These are almost the only golden hours, entirely free from bitterness or self-reproach, that are entered on the tablets of memory. All the rest are streaked with selfishness or sordidness, tinged with sadness or disappointment ; a reflection to incite us to more frequent communion with nature, and whet our desire to understand her in her most beautiful, solemn, and mysterious aspects. Before suffering ourselves to be caught inextricably in a network of small cares and worries, or even overwhelmed and disheartened by great ones, it will be profitable to keep the mind open and ready to receive strength from any stone, flower, leaf, or sound, ay, even from "the dew that falls on us out of the sky."

XXXVII

THE SEEDS WE SCATTER.

*So live, that when the sun,
Of your existence sinks in night,
Memories sweet of mercies done
May shrine your name in memory's light
And the blest seeds you scattered bloom
A hundred fold in days to come.*

—Sir John Bowring.

COMMON charity ordains that we speak kindly of the dead. However little a man or a woman has been loved in life, no words of criticism are spoken over the grave that imposes eternal silence on its victim. But often, a secret feeling of relief is experienced in a household, when one who, by excessive severity, ill-temper, or other unamiable trait of character, habitually disturbed the peace of the rest, is called to a last account.

Few of us, however self-willed and dominant we may be by nature, like to think that our removal from the earthly scene will be a subject of rejoicing to those who are now compelled to live with us. There is one way of discovering whether this contingency is likely to occur. It might be profitable to all of us to have recourse to it, with a view of increasing our amiability, and adding materially to the happiness of others. Examine the nature of your influence on the family,

individually and collectively, and if you find that your presence, under any circumstances, imposes an uncomfortable restraint on the others, resolve, in future, to correct your tendency to be over-critical, or severe. Respect for the rights of others, and a proper sense of the fallibility of private judgment, (especially as applied to matters that do not concern us), should help us to overcome the temptation to interfere in matters outside our jurisdiction. I would especially recommend this suggestion to sisters and brothers who are too ready to frown down and ridicule any proposals one of their number may make, forgetting that all are equally entitled to their own opinions, and subject only to parental authority, in matters calling for supervision. Those families are happiest in which the parents accord to each child a fair hearing, and equal opportunities of advancing their separate interests. Unfortunately, much injustice is habitually done to younger members of families, by the selfishness of older ones, who assume the rôle of censor to their juniors, thus making themselves feared and disliked, where they ought to be loved and trusted.

Much of the pleasure of life is forfeited by persons of a carping or overbearing disposition, because as soon as their unamiable weakness is discovered, they are shut out from the confidences of those who would otherwise naturally turn to them, when they have anything of interest to communicate. "Don't tell Agnes, she would be sure to make such a fuss," or "For goodness' sake, don't mention it to Edward, or we'll never hear the end of it," are little injunctions that frequently form the peroration of some interesting story, confided to one whose discretion has been tried and not found wanting. How eloquent they are of the small domestic tyrannies practised by Agnes and Edward in their respective households.

We cannot all achieve greatness of a kind that will bring us fame and honour, but with a little patience and good-will, we can so live, that when the time comes for us to bid a last farewell to our life-companions here, none will say in their hearts, "It is better so."



XXXVIII

THE GREATEST NAMES.

*The greatest names are those which men have made
for themselves.*

—H. S. Merriman.

THE conquest of the world is not reserved alone for those who sit in high places, enjoying a heritage of power or great renown, bequeathed to them by illustrious ancestors. It is open to every individual who is willing and able to give the best that is in him to the service of humanity. There are endless avenues leading to the same glorious pinnacle of fame and honour. The scholar, the soldier, the statesman, the poet, the inventor, the scientist, the explorer, the orator, the philanthropist, the artist, the priest, the physician, each in his own time and way by “endless toil and endeavour,”

makes the long and difficult ascent that leads to rest and glorious reward. According to the measure of his earnestness, fidelity, perseverance and unselfishness of purpose, is his progress upwards. Every word and act born of pride, or vain self-seeking is a false step that causes him to slide back from the height already attained, and while he painfully recommences his journey, those who faithfully resisted the same temptations are steadily rising far above him.

We are too fond of calling by the name of genius the collective force of qualities which would not be denied

to any of us were we only willing to cultivate them by constant and patient effort. Absolute sincerity and singleness of purpose, a conscientious and thorough performance of the tasks assigned to us, the concentration of attention and energy on one worthy object, a wholesome contempt of trivial and temporary successes, or cheap applause, of small rivalries and jealousies, of criticism or censure from unimportant sources—these are not characteristics peculiar to genius alone—they are the fruit of honesty, fidelity, moral courage and the sense of personal dignity which is enjoined by the famous motto of the true aristocrat: *Noblesse oblige*.

In the ranks of our own sex we find a bright array of names which shine with no borrowed lustre, but only with the radiance of a justly acquired renown. The fame of the brilliant Sappho survives even the fruit of her wonderful pen, of which only a few fragments remain to establish her claims to literary celebrity. Cornelia, after the Virgin Mary, stands as the highest type of motherhood, and will so stand till the end of time; Jean of Arc emerged from the deepest obscurity to save her country; Florence Nightingale had never a thought of fame before the Crimean war; the depths of her womanly compassion were stirred on reading of the terrible sufferings of the British soldiers, and girding on the invisible armour of a wonderful courage, strength and sweetness, she went nobly to the rescue of her wounded countrymen, with results the world still stands amazed to see! Grace Darling found a mission of heroic usefulness in the isolation of a lighthouse. Frances Willard began her career as a school-mistress. How many of us are more favourably conditioned than any of these for great achievement! We fail to emulate their efforts, not because we cannot, but because we will not do as much as they have done. We do not choose to be as brave,

as patient, as self-denying, as high-minded as they. Our hearts are set on smaller things, and we shrink from encountering obstacles of serious dimensions. It is easier and pleasanter to turn back and drift along with the crowd.

But there are times when we cannot but pause and ask ourselves, with heart-searching scrutiny that humbles us to the dust : "What kind of a name am I making for myself?"



XXXIX

THE ENJOYMENT OF VIRTUE.

The entire object of true education is to make people not do the right things, but enjoy the right things.

—Ruskin.

TO do what is right, unless a proper motive inspires the action, is after all no such difficult nor intrinsically creditable achievement. Any intelligent person having a certain force of will may acquire the habit of conforming to certain standards of conduct, or may occasionally do violence to his or her natural inclinations with a view of earning public applause, or furthering some other selfish and private ends. Others may, from a blind sense of duty, follow, "like dumb, driven cattle," where they are led, never asking themselves why such and such actions are right and others wrong, assuming that their teachers and leaders must know, and rather stupidly accepting as inevitable the most distasteful conditions imposed on them as essential to a right life. Others again, moved only by a craven fear of punishment, the "whip to keep the coward to his track," are easily reduced to the kind of moral subjection which removes even the temptation to independent thought or action. There is, of course, no real merit either in a conventional conformity to accepted standards for selfish reasons, nor in the sheep-like submission which precludes an intelligent appreciation of the logical necessity of right living, nor in the base subservience founded on an abject fear of

future suffering. No man can appreciably grow in virtue until he has arrived at the point of view which reveals to him the ultimate desirability of virtuous action, for its own sake, without regard to prospective rewards or punishments.

Many persons, aiming at moral perfection (while ignoring its true nature), experience a certain gratification, not to say self-glorification, from the consciousness of having achieved a victory over the flesh in an endeavour to obey a higher impulse. But, in fact, the struggle that has taken place over a comparatively trifling matter, is but a humiliating indication of the distance yet to be traversed before the soul can attain the heights of spiritual perfection. The philosopher often reaches this altitude before the saint—so-called—the former being in reality, more entitled to the appellation. For the philosopher, indeed, temptations of the ordinary kind at least, soon cease to exist. He is not compelled to wage a pitched battle with the powers of darkness every time he becomes aware that his senses and his soul are at variance. He brings a calm and judicial spirit to the consideration of the case. If he chooses the wiser part, he does not become unduly elated over what, after all, was merely the prudent exercise of his reason ; nor would he dare to exaggerate the importance of such a choice by ascribing it to a direct manifestation of divine participation in human affairs. When he errs, he does it consciously, accepting the blame and the risks, with a full knowledge of his fault and its probable consequences. If repentance comes later, it is not of the ignoble kind which shields itself behind the plea of the weakness of the flesh and the violence of temptation. It is a frank confession of wrong-doing, an honest regret that sense prevailed over reason, a serious determination to avoid a similar pitfall in the future.

Education can do this much for us all. A great deal of what is called religious instruction is either utterly wasted, or has a pernicious effect on immature minds. Instead of developing noble qualities, it encourages the growth of selfishness, cowardice and superstition. The mind must first be opened before salutary and fruitful ideas can be instilled into it. Learning moral law by rote and practising it as a matter of habit or discipline, will never save a single human soul. We must first learn to grasp its meaning, to comprehend its beauty, and then we shall need no spur to urge us to do our duty, because we shall have found our keenest enjoyment in the pursuit of the loftiest ideals.

As the distinguished writer and thinker above quoted (and now, alas! no more), has wisely said, this is the entire object of true education. He or she must be accounted a false teacher who works with any other end in view.



XL

THE GREAT AND THE SMALL.

One of the happy surprises of existence seems to be that of discovering in the power of doing a difficult thing well, a developed grace for doing lesser things better.

—Annie Fields.

AN objection not infrequently raised against the higher education of women is that in the majority of cases, it is likely to unfit them for the ordinary domestic duties which are imposed on them by marriage.

At first sight the objection would seem to be well founded. It is, of course, vastly more important that the prospective wife and mother should possess a practical knowledge of cookery, be proficient with her needle, and understand the care of children, than that she should become a brilliant mathematician or an accomplished linguist. But on the other hand, it has been abundantly proven, in many well-known instances, that the women who make the most perfect housekeepers are those who are most diligent and successful in following what are commonly called the higher pursuits of art, literature, or science. The domestic experiences of George Eliot, Miss Martineau, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mrs. Oliphant, and many other women no less distinguished on the intellectual side, may be cited as affording satisfactory evidence in favour of the presumption that a woman's head, no less, if not more

than her heart, is a factor to be reckoned with in determining the limit of her housewifely capacity.

It is true that the Mrs. Jellybys of real life are by no means an extinct species, but the degree of incapacity which assigns any woman to this category is more often inherent, than the result of injudicious training. There will always be some hopelessly incompetent housekeepers among both the educated and ignorant classes.

But given two women of equal intelligence and general aptitude, the one whose mind has been developed and trained by study or wide reading, almost invariably administers her household affairs with greater success than the other whose experience is limited to purely domestic matters.

The reason of the educated woman's supremacy is plain. To the trained intelligence, all, even the commonest tasks of life, come within the domain of art or science. They present desired opportunities for testing the practical value of favourite theories, for the application of great principles, and the observation of immutable laws. Viewed in this light, the ordinary household duties which an uneducated woman performs mechanically and with a dreary sense of the endless drudgery they entail, become in the eyes of her thinking sister so many interesting experiments through which the theoretic knowledge gained from books or in the lecture hall is supplemented by the more valuable experience of actual practice.

The enlightened woman looks at her life as a whole, and plans its arrangement and government in conformity with a certain ideal which, as a result of her superior mental training is naturally a high one. Having ascertained her true place in the world, and the precise nature of the responsibilities which rest upon her, and her alone, she proceeds to map out her future course

with intelligence and foresight. Obstacles she sees in plenty, but she regards them as mere temporary, though often vexatious obstructions, which must finally yield before her invincible determination to succeed.

We all know how easy effort becomes when inspired by an eager desire to attain a particular object. No amount of discomfort or inconvenience deters us from following a favourite pursuit, though we grumble unceasingly at the far easier conditions imposed on us by obligations not of our own seeking. Have you ever watched an amateur photographer at work and noticed how she washes her negatives and prints over and over again to secure the desired degree of perfect cleanliness. She is so intent on producing a good result that she esteems the most laborious process leading up to it a mere detail. In the joy of succeeding, she scarcely perceives that her fingers are stained a dirty brown ; she forgets the cost of plates and solutions, and has no regrets for the time spent on preliminary experiments. Having produced a good picture, her joy is complete.

The woman of education follows the same plan in the direction of her household affairs. In her mind's eye there is always that perfect picture of the ideal home which she is earnestly striving to produce. She knows that time and patience and money must be expended before her experiments can ripen into successful achievement. In the dark room of doubt and perplexity she must often sit alone developing by a single red ray of love the sensitive negatives that require such delicate manipulation. She is never disheartened by small failures nor satisfied with small successes. There may seem to be overmuch washing of dishes or dirty little faces to do ; it may not always be clear to her tired brain how the scheme of the universe is being helped out by her diligence in darn-

ing socks and making jam. But the conviction that through these small things she will yet reach the goal she is striving for infallibly sustains her. She moves steadily forward, with ever increasing ease and rapidity, and every step gained is its own reward. She experiences a subtle sense of pleasure in the knowledge that upon the successful discharge of her particular duties hinge far-reaching consequences of tremendous importance to future generations. For her,

“Joy’s soul lies in the doing,”

and when the time comes at last to lay down her tasks, she does it not gladly but regretfully, as we close a book whose pages we have perused with pleasure.

This is the secret of the highest human happiness, of true union with God. It is to realize the divine outlook which embraces all time and space. In such a mighty sweep of vision all things great and small assume their true proportions, and there is no longer any danger of mistaking the trivial and transient for the sublime and eternal.



IF WE HAD BUT A DAY.

*We should fill the hours with the sweetest things,
If we had but a day ;
We should drink alone at the purest springs
In our upward way ;
We should love with a lifetime's love in an hour,
If the hours were few ;
We should rest, not for dreams, but for fresher power
To be and to do.*

—Mary Lowe Dickinson.

IF we had but a day ! Standing on the very threshold of Eternity, with what piercing insight we should see through the shams and delusions which surround us in ordinary life, and of which, in the expectation of a long term of existence we are only too willing to become the dupes. With what unerring instinct we would range ourselves on the side of duty, of love, of justice, of useful toil and honourable achievement ! Who could tempt us during the few precious hours remaining to us to stray into the primrose paths of dalliance, to occupy our minds with petty thoughts of personal gain, to grovel in envy or jealousy, or to breathe a blighting word of slander concerning a fellow-creature. With ears alert for the fast approaching summons, how eagerly we would seek to fill our last moments on earth with deeds of mercy ! How tenderly we would look upon those near and dear to us,

how gently we would speak to them, gladly overlooking such slight offences as they might have committed against us, in our vehement desire to be at peace with them, to be remembered by them with love, and to be spoken of by them praisefully when we should no longer be in their midst. It would not be difficult at all. Nay, we should marvel at ourselves that we ever spoke or acted otherwise, and we would think in our hearts : " Could I but live this life over again, it would be oh! so different!"

Yet consider. There is no day that, but for the providence of God would not be the last for each one of us. We walk perilously near the edge of the precipice that divides us from the unseen world. The instruments of Death are many, and they take undreamed-of shapes. They threaten us continually. It is a miracle that we are saved. Others fall to right and left of us, smitten by sickness or sorrow, by lightning, sword, or plague, by whirlwind, accident or a treacherous hand. Our turn will come—when? We cannot say, we only know for a certainty that it must come. To-morrow! Why not? The thought is not, or should not be one to terrify or sadden us. It need not shut out the sunshine from our hearts. Rather should it urge us to diffuse what light and warmth is in us, while we may, to

" fill our hours with the sweetest things,"
and to

" love with a lifetime's love in an hour,"
thus making every passing moment yield us a full harvest of lasting happiness.

We are so constituted, however, that the majority of us would prove unequal to the strain involved by constant fidelity to such a high ideal. It is a humiliating confession this, of the average human being, that

he cannot maintain the maximum of virtuous living for any considerable period of time. The occasional lapses into selfishness, indolence, materialism, appear to be inevitable. Well, even supposing this to be so, it would still be a profitable exercise, and one which would immensely increase the sum of human happiness if only from time to time we could awake from the spiritual apathy which seems to be largely our normal condition, and, realizing the unceasing imminence of that last dread call, exert ourselves to live the hours between one sunrise and sunset as if, indeed, it was the only day remaining to us on earth.



SOLITUDE.

Every life should have a background of solitude.

—Selected.

LT is not good for either man or woman to be constantly alone, but occasional opportunities for solitude are precious privileges which too often are misused or entirely thrown away. The social instinct is so strongly developed in some natures that to be deprived of human company for a single day, or even a few hours, appears to them an affliction hardly to be endured.

This would indicate a poverty of individual resources by no means flattering to the mental calibre of a person so affected. There is something abject and pitiful in the habitual dependence on others for ideas of entertainment. Surely, we should all carry within us a sufficient store of memories, experiences, and predilections, to supply us in hours of leisure with material for thought or motives for action. The old saw runs : “Tell me who your company is and I’ll tell you who you are.” With equal point one might say, “Tell me what you do with your solitude and I’ll tell you what you are.”

Our real nature asserts itself much more strongly when we are alone, than when we are on our guard in the presence of others. If solitude induces in one a sudden relaxation of the physical and moral fibres, a



SOLITUDE.

sense of liberation from the irksome necessity of keeping up appearances, and a tendency to indulge in selfish, grovelling, or otherwise unworthy thoughts or actions, one is thereby convicted of a weak and shallow or even vicious nature, and all one's seeming virtues become so many hypocrisies which have only this merit, that they make one endurable to those who would shrink from contact with one's real self.

A truly noble individuality, on the contrary, appears at its best in solitude. This is its time for reflection, for retrospection, for that calm scrutiny and impartial judgment of self which is essential to the right development of character. Or, it is the time for communing with nature, who reveals her secrets only to those who approach her as they would approach a shrine, in silence and reverence ; or, it may be, the hour of solitude is reserved for that sweet and satisfying intimacy with the greatest minds which is accessible to us all through the medium of books.

The richer one's nature, the more numerous and pleasant the by-ways which invite one to stray from the dusty road of routine in the golden hours of solitude. A brush and box of colours for one, a needle and bit of embroidery for another, a horse or a wheel for the more active and exuberant, supply the desired occupation for solitary moments. Each in its way, becomes to its votary, a source of serene and abiding happiness, undisturbed by those doubts and misgivings that often mingle unpleasantly with memories of pleasures shared by others.

It may be given almost as an axiom that, without "a background of solitude" in one's life to encourage reflection, one never can penetrate below the surface of things. The deeps of experience, the highest aspirations, the sweetest raptures, the sacredness of sorrow, the sublimity of the universe, will forever be to one as

so many sealed volumes. On the other hand, every hour of solitude well spent, is a distinct step forward in the direction of intellectual and spiritual progress.

Not only does it deepen the character and strengthen the heart, but it ennobles the countenance to a degree that is obvious to all. It lends a light to the forehead and eyes, and a beauty to the curves of the lips, that you may look for in vain among the frivolous and shallow-minded, who are incapable of reflection.

There is every reason, therefore, for cultivating the precious opportunities for solitude that occur in daily life. Make provision for them beforehand, if you would not, when they come, be found aimlessly asking, "What shall I do with myself?" and manifesting an undignified readiness to fall in with any proposal, however foolish, for killing time.

Walk, sew, read poetry, look at pictures, copy a beautiful passage from a favourite author, or learn it by heart, make an imaginary journey with the help of a map to some place of interest, put yourself through an examination in contemporary history or literature, and note your deficiencies. These are but a few of the countless interesting occupations that may beguile a solitary hour and leave you the better for it. You may discover many more, by giving a little thought to the subject, and thus learn to put a value upon your hours of solitude far above that of the time spent in the society of ordinary men and women among whom your lot happens to be cast.



XLIII

THE SECRET OF HOLINESS.

*The saints were men who did less than other people,
but who did what they had to do a thousand times better.*

—F. W. Faber.

ONE is constantly surprised, in reading the lives of the saints, to discover how many trifles, so to speak, went to compose the saintliness that left its impress on an entire world. We are apt to imagine that in order to become a saint a certain background and conditions favourable to such an intention are essential conditions to success. A good many of us have a secret conviction that it would not be at all difficult to live a saintly life provided we might choose the desired setting and opportunities. This is, of course, an entirely erroneous impression. Holiness is a positive attribute that exists independently of chances or changes, and that asserts itself unconsciously and inevitably in the most unlooked-for ways, times and places. It has its seat in the heart alone, not in the habit one assumes, nor the house that shelters one. The substitution of broadcloth for tweed, of a veil for a bonnet, of a cell for an ordinary sleeping room, though of apparently great significance in the eyes of the world, is of surprisingly small account in the spiritual balance sheet.

Human nature has an inveterate habit of cropping out from beneath the most effective disguises. An

inclination to run away from all the irksome and disagreeable conditions of one state in life, with a view of arriving at perfection in another, is an extremely doubtful indication of sincerity. The girl who has failed to exercise any influence for good in her own home imagines that if she could go to China as a missionary she would be on the high road to perfection and canonization. In her complete lack of experience, she is unable to realize that she will encounter the same stumbling-blocks in an Eastern mission as beset her feet in her native village or under her father's roof. There will be the same little disappointments, discomforts, trials of temper, rivalries, temptations and humiliations. Wherever grown men and women are forced to live together and come in daily contact with one another, a certain amount of unpleasant friction is inevitable. The exception is when they are actuated by the spirit of Christian charity ; when they have attained that nobility of character which is proof against all petty temptations and weaknesses of the flesh. To reach such a high level, it is not necessary to cut adrift from one's ordinary surroundings. The patient practice of the common virtues of modesty, charity, loving-kindness and fidelity in all things great and small leads more surely and directly to the heights of spiritual life than a violent sundering of old ties and uprooting of confirmed habits.

One who earnestly desires to lead a holy life has no excuse for putting off the first step. The place is Here, the time is Now. However light or trivial, however onerous or distasteful the tasks of to-day, assume them with the resolution of performing them as a Saint Teresa or a Saint Frances would have done, without complaint, without complacency, working not for the applause of the world nor for private gain, but as a faithful servant of the Master who has called you to

labour in His vineyard. Greater victories await you here than you would ever secure in distant places. Accept your allotted tasks not only with willingness, but with gratitude, as those which offer the best opportunity for proving your devotion. In time the hardest of them will become easy, the most distasteful sweet. And by that sign you will know that your growth in holiness is assured.



XLIV

THE CAPACITY FOR HAPPINESS.

There is nothing so great as to be capable of happiness, to pluck it out of “each moment and whatever happens,” to find that one can ride as gay and buoyant on the angry, menacing, tumultuous waves of life as on those that glide and glitter under a clear sky ; that it is not defeat and wretchedness which come out of the storms of adversity, but strength and calmness.

—Anne Gilchrist.

I KNOW women who, with all their material wants satisfied, enjoying perfect health, and surrounded by kind friends and relatives, are in a chronic state of discontent and ill-humour. They are unhappy, not because of any hard conditions or unfavourable circumstances governing their lives, but simply because they are incapable of feeling happy. Their hearts are obstinately closed against all the most beautiful, joyous and gracious influences surrounding them, while their eyes are ever perversely seeking out the most disagreeable and unsatisfactory aspects of things. Other women I know, who have been forced to endure every kind and degree of sorrow, pain, privation, disappointment. But an inherent nobility of character, an intelligent apprehension of the real value of a hard experience, an indomitable courage, a rare sweetness of disposition, combine to counteract in them the effects of the severest trials of love, faith or patience.

The capacity for happiness, which is inseparable from the cultivated mind and generous heart, may be temporarily weakened by the blows of adversity, but it is not destroyed. Indeed, in a mind rightly constituted, pain has the effect of sharpening the perceptions and emphasizing the preciousness of all that pleases, comforts, or sustains the soul. Those who have suffered most deeply have the keenest appreciation of true happiness in whatever form it presents itself.

A fatal obstacle to the happiness of human beings in perhaps the majority of cases, is the foolish and false conviction that it cannot exist independently of certain preconceived conditions and coveted possessions. The man or woman who starts out in pursuit of happiness, acting on such belief, is foredoomed to grievous disappointment. Because you are presently weighed down with financial cares, or are physically overtaxed, or discouraged by protracted illness, you are apt to imagine that the removal of any of these irksome conditions would spell Happiness in big letters. This is a delusion, as you may easily prove by questioning any number of persons who actually enjoy complete immunity from the woes that oppress you. Those only are happy who want to be so, who apply themselves to the art of learning how to be so, and who discover in the process, that the sources of true happiness, are not without, but within us. A sweet reasonableness is the first essential requirement of a contented mind. A dignified attitude in the face of contradiction, loss, or disappointment, helps powerfully to preserve the serenity of one's disposition. To fret, and whine, and sulk is ignoble and childish. The grain of common sense which informs us that it is useless to cry over spilt milk should also check many a fit of ill-temper or disappointment.

Let us but make up our minds that our chief business in life is to be happy, and it will soon become a matter

of pride to see with what scanty materials we can successfully reach that result. It is far from a selfish aim, because the happy person alone knows how to diffuse happiness, while the melancholy or discontented one casts a gloomy shadow over many other lives besides his or her own. It is, therefore, distinctly wrong and unfair to yield to the depression of spirits that is brought on by some unexpected or unavoidable stroke of adversity, and we should be as much ashamed of giving way to that temptation as to any other that incites to wrong-doing. To admit one's unhappiness is tantamount to a confession that one has neither Faith, Hope, nor Love, that—in short—one is not a Christian.



LOOKING UPWARD.

If we look down then our shoulders stoop. If our thoughts look down our character bends. It is only when we hold our heads up that the body becomes erect. It is only when our thoughts go up that our life becomes erect.

—Alexander McKenzie, D.D.

THE most perfectly formed body may have its symmetry destroyed and may be rendered ugly to a repulsive degree, by a habitual tendency to stoop. The chest contracts, the back curves outward in a disfiguring hump, the shoulders fall down and forward, the waist-line is raised until it almost meets the chest, or quite disappears, in short, the whole figure is ruined, and the walk degenerates into a slouching gait that inspires contempt and repugnance in all beholders.

Such a wanton disfigurement of the “human form divine” is a sin for which, beyond a doubt, due punishment is reserved, in this world or the next.

But if the neglect or abuse of mere physical perfections is such a grievous fault, how shall we characterize the guilt of one who suffers the moral nature to undergo a similar unhappy transformation?

A certain degree of moral degeneracy is inevitable when the thoughts, instead of being resolutely trained upward, are suffered to trail downwards always, concerning themselves only with common material or

selfish interests and cares ; seeing in life only an opportunity for personal indulgence or advancement ; recognizing as good only those attainments or possessions that have a commercial value ; ready at all times to barter the intellectual or the spiritual for the material, the eternal for the temporal.

When the thoughts "go up" on the other hand, "our life becomes erect." We need no other stay nor brace than this to counteract the fatal tendency to stoop.

The study of what is intrinsically high, noble and beautiful, lifts us effectually out of the commonplace, the mean and sordid ruts of life. We no longer grovel, we soar. The things that occupy vulgar minds are henceforth beneath our notice. From a narrow world of dull fact and prose we emerge into a boundless universe made glorious with countless and sublime manifestations of divine power. We feel ourselves related to all times, all persons, all places. The finite loses itself in the infinite. Our sense of proportion is readjusted. What was once important in our eyes now stands revealed as utterly insignificant—unworthy of thought or effort. And what we formerly despised or neglected as unnecessary, superfluous, we now recognize and assiduously cultivate as the highest desiderata of our earthly existence.

This much cannot be accomplished for us by religion alone, in the ordinary sense attached to the word, that is, the purely devotional spirit. The real knowledge of God, which comes to us as well through a study of His works as of His word is the lever that lifts the soul to its true altitude, and keeps it erect. In the pursuit of every branch of science, art, or industry, this knowledge may be, in part, acquired and made our own.

As it grows, it changes for us the whole aspect of life. We learn, by degrees, to refer everything to God, to

measure all our words and actions by His approval, to sympathize with Him, so to speak, in such a degree that we are no longer perplexed or confused when His designs appear to clash with our human interests. We have glimmerings, at least, of the providential reasons which determine the course of events, and a sense of the puerility or deep selfishness of the considerations which would move us were we invested with the divine prerogative of supreme sovereignty over human affairs.

Thus we learn lessons of faith, submission, trust and infinite patience. Thus are we trained to walk erect through all the trials and vicissitudes of life. It is a good watchword for the faint-hearted, the weak-kneed, for those who shuffle and slouch through life, "Walk erect."



XLVI

THE FORMATION OF CHARACTER.

You cannot dream yourself into a character ; you must hammer and forge yourself one.

—Froude.

THE habit of dreaming—with the eyes open—is one to which most young girls and even women, incline both by nature, and as a result of the secluded and sedentary lives which the majority of them lead. There is virtue in beautiful dreams, when they are kept within proper bounds and not allowed to usurp the mind to the exclusion of the more serious affairs of life. They serve to foster our ideals, and to keep idle, frivolous, or other unworthy thoughts, at bay. They are also a sweet panacea against pain, disappointment, and other troubles that may thicken around our path. Many a dull and sordid life is gilded for patient, struggling souls, by dreams of what might be, under less adverse conditions. These are some of the legitimate uses of dreams.

But it is against the abuse of the lovely and beguiling thoughts and visions that haunt the mind persistently in hours of solitude, that I would warn the growing girl or the young wife and mother. Even when day-dreams are not positively harmful, they are at best barren of good results to ourselves or others, and thus the time given to them is diverted from some more useful purpose.

The dreaming habit may be conquered by persistent and systematic effort. Instead of thinking constantly of what you would like to be, endeavour to realize what you are. If conscious that yours is far from an ideal character, rouse yourself to a sense of its deficiencies, and "hammer and forge yourself" a new one.

When the round of daily duties, as frequently happens, includes many which enforce solitude and silence, I can think of no better safeguard against idle dreams than the habit of committing to memory favourite passages from the works of the best poets. This is an exercise which contributes more effectually than any other to the adornment of the mind, and the cultivation of a sound literary taste.

Perfect familiarity with the gems of English literature is a rare accomplishment even amongst the best educated men and women. Nevertheless, it is one that is easily acquired, and that never fails to invest the possessor with a covetable charm and distinction, not to be compared with the mild degree of interest inspired by ordinary proficiency in music, art or science. If but one-half of the time wasted by the girl of to-day on the piano, the pencil, or the reading of novels, was devoted to the study of good poetry, there would soon be a very noticeable elevation of the prevailing standard of taste and conduct.

It is a good plan to observe some system in acquiring this accomplishment. An intimate and accurate acquaintance with the works of one great author is an indication of truer culture than a superficial knowledge of many. It is, therefore, well to propose to oneself to become a student of Shakespeare, Milton, Browning, Wordsworth, Dante, or any other favourite author, and to devote oneself lovingly and perseveringly to this self-appointed task.

A choice like this does not exclude other writers

from one's attention or affections, but merely implies a particular devotion to one whom it will be a matter of pride and honour to make one's very own.

Young girls often write to me for advice on the subject of home study. To none can I make a more valuable suggestion than this : Read and study the best authors. This is education in the highest sense of the word ; it costs little or nothing to acquire it, and your own conscientious application is the only essential factor of success. All the professors and universities in the world cannot do as much for you.



THE WANT OF MOTIVE.

What makes life dreary is the want of motive.

—George Eliot.

A PATHETIC little letter came to me one day, containing this request :

“ Dear Friend,—Will you not write a little talk for girls who are lonely and sad, but who are trying to be brave? Something we can keep and read over and over again when things go wrong! talk to those who in the saddest sense of the word are alone, without any of girlhood’s pleasures. You will never know, dear friend, how we long to be as you would have us be.”

This was written by a young girl—a teacher in a small town who is quite alone in the world, and whose life, I am afraid, is, in more than one sense, a dreary one. There are many other girls among my readers, in similar circumstances. They are struggling on, with what courage and strength they can muster to cope with their daily tasks and trials, finding no joy in the monotonous, colourless existence from which they see no prospect of escape, feeling, somehow, out of touch with their surroundings and the people they meet, dreaming, I fear, always of other duties and spheres of action in which they feel sure they would find the happiness that now seems ever to elude them.

I am truly sorry for every young girl who finds herself in such a position, yet, I should fail in my duty towards them all, as a friend and adviser, if I refrained from telling them that the root of their trouble lies in their own hearts, and not at all in their exterior condi-

tions which they are apt to regard as the determining forces of their lives.

First of all, they must cease thinking of themselves. A young girl is too apt to look at life from a purely personal point of view. She craves love, sympathy, appreciation. In her estimate of human beings, no one counts who does not, in some way, exercise a direct and agreeable influence over her own life. "What good is that to me?" is the test she applies to any beautiful or good thing, or interesting fact brought before her notice.

Surely this is an extremely narrow and ungenerous attitude to assume towards the world she lives in, with its teeming interests, its inexhaustible resources; or towards her fellow-creatures, each of whom has the same feelings, longings, hopes and need of sympathy as she.

Another fault of youth is its impatience. Before she is well out of her teens, a girl expects to have reached the great turning-point in her life which is to give definite aim and shape to her future. Such a feeling of unrest is fatal to serious effort, or concentration of purpose in any direction. I should like every girl to repeat often to herself the line above quoted :

"What makes life dreary is the want of motive."

Have you a motive in life? or are you just drifting along this way or that, as every breeze and current may drive or lead you? Is your motive a good one, worthy, unselfish, stimulating? If not, make haste to provide yourself with one which will furnish you with a constant incentive to improve yourself and do good to others.

Let us suppose you live among dull, unresponsive, wholly uncongenial people. You feel that your superior talent or education, your fine feelings and

intuitions are wasted in such an atmosphere. My dear young friend, it is precisely because you are superior to those around you that you have been placed among them. You have a beautiful work appointed to you. Would not you, yourself, be greatly pleased if some stranger, charming, gifted, and kind, came to reside in your sleepy little town? Would not you feel distinctly benefited, exhilarated, encouraged by daily companionship with one whose every word and act was gracious and inspiring ; who, in appearance, voice and manner, satisfied your ideal of the perfect man, or the perfect woman? Now, why should not you seek to wield just such an influence over those whom it is your lot to meet every day? Try the experiment. You will find it deeply interesting. But in order to succeed you must work, study, improve yourself in every way; even to the smallest details of your dress and surroundings. Above all, you must be agreeable, cheerful, sympathetic, not only to those of your own class, or of the one above you, but to the humblest of your fellow-creatures as well. They are all your brothers and sisters. There is a divine spark in the breast of each one of them. They have as much right to your sympathy as you have to the sympathy you crave from those who are more fortunate than you. When you deny it to them, they think you indifferent and cruel, as you think the world when it takes no notice of you.

I shall be glad if I have made clear to you the duty of living to some noble, unselfish purpose. Let me close with a few words of advice, and a promise which is full of hope, and sweetness and encouragement :

Resolve to give ungrudgingly, at least a year or two of your strong young life to the service of others. Say, "I am young. I can afford to wait for my own opportunity." Indulge in no more day-dreams, trouble yourself not at all about what may befall you. Determine

simply to enrich by your help and sympathy, the lives of some more wretched than yourself. If you carry out these suggestions as I should wish you to do, you will soon find that you have no time to be lonely or sad. What right have you to be mooning when there is one who needs your cheerful company ; when you can be storing your mind with beautiful, helpful thoughts ; when your fingers might be fashioning some simple garments for the poor, when a bright sky invites you to an invigorating walk? Come, you are not the sort of girl who is going to mope or shed idle tears when things go wrong. You are going to brace up and make them go right again, or if that is hopeless, you will put them out of your thoughts altogether, and address yourself to some more promising tasks. There is too much work waiting to be done to permit of useless grieving over failures or disappointments.

My promise? Here it is. You will find in working thus for others a secret of happiness which no one can ever wrest from you again. Your nature will be so purified, strengthened, enriched, that love and appreciation will be poured out on you without the seeking, from the most unexpected sources. You will become a power in whatever sphere of life you may be called to occupy. Everybody will be glad that you have lived. In the exercise of this power you will find a sweetness which no words can describe. You will learn to regard yourself, not as the centre of a little universe in which you expect all rays from without to converge, but just as a humble instrument of the Omnipotent Father, in whose hands the destinies of all are safe. You will realize the wickedness of doubt, dissatisfaction, and despair; the joy of faith, of hope, of charity. In short, you will be happy in a degree that has never yet been attained by any who build on the insecure foundation of exterior conditions and circumstances.

XLVIII

THE TEST OF EDUCATION.

No woman is educated who is not equal to the successful management of a family.

—Burnup.

THE family is the nation in epitome. The successful family is the most important and perfect factor in the strength, greatness and prosperity of the nation to which it belongs. An unsuccessful family is a point of weakness in the social structure, liable at any moment to crumble away and bring disaster on a large number. Therefore, no work can be of greater importance or dignity than that of managing a family.

It is a difficult and complicated business, the numerous ramifications of which can hardly be apprehended by one who has no practical knowledge thereof. No doubt it is sheer ignorance of the extreme gravity of the task before them that enables so many women to assume it with light hearts and without the smallest attempt at preparation. Surely no one could grasp the full significance of wifhood and motherhood and remain unmoved by a solemn sense of the responsibility attached to these terms. Yet how many there are who cross the fateful Rubicon of marriage with no other thought or hope than one of gratified vanity or shallow ambition that looks not beyond the day of small triumphs, good only to excite the admiration and envy of the frivolous and vain.

More and more clear is it becoming every day that the rock on which domestic happiness most frequently founders is that fatal lack of preparation for the serious duties of life that is the result of the wrong educational methods adopted in the bringing up of the modern girl. So firmly am I persuaded of this that I would almost be tempted to advocate the substitution of manual training in the useful arts in all the schools for the ordinary curriculum of "studies" that do no good to the students nor to any one else. Let a child be taught to read and write, indeed, and to cast up figures, but instead of stuffing the poor little brains with queer facts and hard dates, with rules and exceptions which to the infant mind must appear so utterly meaningless ; instead of making the poor little arms ache with "practising" useless accomplishments, would it not be infinitely wiser, kinder and ultimately more beneficial to all concerned, to give the same time and attention to the training of the future head of a family in those arts which make for comfort, peace and well-being in the home.

Is it not in the highest degree inconsistent, not to say cruel, to set a growing girl to accomplish certain tiresome and difficult mental feats which are held up to her, through the formative years of her life as the end and aim towards which she must bend all her energies, direct all her aspirations ; then when the tasks are all accomplished, the medals won, the certificates duly framed and hung up on the wall, to place her at the head of a household and expect her, at the risk of being severely blamed, criticised and rendered generally miserable, to develop a sudden genius for domesticity, to exhibit a perfect familiarity with kitchen utensils, to bake, and boil, and brew like an expert, to direct inexperienced servants, to know the danger that lurks in a defective drain pipe or a dirty dish cloth ; to cope

with dishonest tradesmen ; to nurse the sick ; to bear and rear children !

Poor thing ! and when she fails, as in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred she inevitably does and must, who thinks of laying the blame where it belongs—on the shoulders of those who robbed her of her birthright of true education in those precious years of her girlhood, when she should have been acquiring useful knowledge, but instead, was forced to sit with idle hands, cramming her head with useless book lore that is now completely forgotten.

It is easy enough to acquire book knowledge at any age, and one who loves it, and to whom it will be in any sense profitable, will surely find a way to it, soon or late. But the hands must be trained early to perform those helpful tasks on which the welfare of the family depends. This, after all, is the most important part of the daughter's education. While she is still in the nursery with her dolls and her dishes, let the toys she loves be her real lesson books. Take the trouble to show her the proper way to care for her “ baby ” and its little wardrobe, to make the toy bed, to lay the table for the “ pretend ” party ; to wash and dry the tiny cups and saucers ; give her the habit of keeping her childish possessions in order, teach her their value, and let her, in some way, feel the loss entailed by their destruction, and the necessity of renewing them. Thus, by gradual steps, lead her to the knowledge of the true housewifely arts that will one day constitute her brightest crown, her richest dowry.

Her mental development need not suffer. A course of good reading in her leisure hours will suffice to cultivate her mind, even if she never sees the inside of a schoolroom. Encourage her to love poetry, and to commit favourite passages to memory, to read the lives of great men, and to trace back to their humble begin-

nings the inventions and enterprises that have most benefited the world. Teach her to observe and admire the handiwork of God, and encourage in her a wholesome curiosity regarding the wonders and beauties and secrets of nature. Let her take daily exercise and recreation in the open air, that she may be both healthy and happy. Teach her to be gentle, modest, truthful, kind. This is the sort of education that produces a woman fit for any calling or position in life, the capable, intelligent, sympathetic, sensible woman, who is faithful in small things and in great, whose hands, heart and head have been equally cultivated. Educators the world over are waking up to the truth at last, and in many directions systematic efforts are being made to do away with various fads and follies sanctioned or encouraged by modern educational methods. It is not too much to hope that radical reforms will be carried out within the next few years. Common-sense is destined to triumph over foolish vanity. There is room for hope that the growing girl of to-day may be given a fair chance to perfect herself in those arts and accomplishments that will render her indispensable to the happiness and comfort of her family, instead of being the expensive burden and ceaseless cause of anxiety she is in too many households as a result of present conditions.



XLIX

ENCOURAGEMENT.

When we take people merely as they are we make them worse ; when we treat them as if they were what they should be, we improve them as far as they can be improved. —Goethe.

THE defects or limitations of those who live under the same roof with us are apt to excite in us a certain impatience, which, if we yield to it, must inevitably warp our judgment in all matters relating to them. We seldom stop to enquire to what extent we ourselves are responsible for these same defects. We are occasionally surprised to discover that they entirely escape the observation of strangers, and that outside the family circle, the one whom we have accustomed ourselves to regard as hopelessly stupid, awkward, or "provoking" (in any sense it may please us to attach to that word), enjoys a certain degree of popularity and esteem.

The true explanation of the surprising fact is so unflattering to our self-esteem that not every one of us is willing to accept it with a good grace. It is simply that our presence has an irritating effect on others, bringing out the worst that is in them and suppressing the very qualities we blame them for not possessing.

Gracious and gentle attributes are the flowers of the soul, that bloom and diffuse their fragrance only in an

atmosphere of light and warmth. It is impossible to see or know, at his or her best, a fellow-creature with whom one does not sympathise. When we assume a censorious or fault-finding attitude towards others, we instantly raise barriers between them and ourselves, which make mutual appreciation impossible. What is the secret of the happiness of lovers if it is not their fond, unshakable belief in one another's good and pleasing qualities, and their persistent and loyal refusal to believe ill of one another. Could we be equally generous with our friends and relatives, the world would indeed be converted into a paradise for all.

There is no more powerful stimulant to self-improvement than the knowledge that those who live with us have formed high expectations in regard to us ; but the conviction that our best efforts will remain unappreciated is a profound source of discouragement and a frequent cause of failure.

In many large families there is a regrettable tendency to poke fun at its individual members who make efforts at self-improvement. By mimicry, satirical comments, or openly unkind allusions the aspirations of the growing girl or boy towards something better than the existing standard of manners and attainments in the home are often rudely checked, if not altogether suppressed.

In the former case, the foundation is laid for antagonisms that must gradually increase, and that will eventually undermine the affection that binds together even the most closely united families. In the latter case a spiritual murderer is committed, for which an account must one day be rendered before the judgment seat.

If the child who is sulky or unruly at home is happy and well-behaved among strangers : if the silent, reserved son or daughter is invariably agreeable and

charming in society, do not too hastily attribute the difference to a natural perversity that can be overcome by reproach or remonstrance. Seek carefully rather to discover in the home atmosphere and surroundings the cause which prevents a naturally sweet disposition from blossoming into perfection, as it readily does when the retarding influence is removed.

Somewhere, be sure, you will find the canker worm of hostility, criticism, jealousy or petty tyranny gnawing at the roots of the character which is in process of formation. Perhaps, if you are humble enough and frank enough to own it, it is you, yourself, who are to blame for the state of things that excites your annoyance. Change your manner a little, be less bitter of speech, slower to find fault, swifter to praise and encourage, less ready to ascribe unworthy motives, more prompt to acknowledge yourself in the wrong. Miracles can be wrought in this way, and though it may seem a hard way at first, in good time the wisdom and value of it will be made so clear that no further effort will be required to persevere in it to the end.



L

SYMPATHY IN JOY.

Grief can take care of itself, but to get the full value of joy you must have somebody to divide it with.

—Mark Twain.

THE truest test of a generous nature is its capacity for sharing the joys of others. It requires little or no effort to sympathize by word or act with sad or suffering humanity. Even when the heart is not deeply stirred, the lips are ready enough to utter conventional expressions of condolence. But it is quite otherwise when sympathy is claimed in the hour of success. Too often, then, the demon of envy and jealousy takes possession of the heart, making sincere participation in the happiness of others impossible. We have all experienced the chilling effect of a curt "Really," or "Oh, indeed!" following the announcement of some piece of good fortune that has come our way, and this even from old friends or near relatives to whom we naturally looked for the warmest sympathy.

The ungenerous attitude which thus throws one back on one's self, forbidding the anticipated pleasant discussion of the various aspects of a joyful event, hurts far more cruelly than a manifestation of indifference in the hour of bereavement. In the latter case, a sensitive nature craves solitude, and scarcely misses the word or token of kindly sympathy withheld from any quarter.

But joy is expansive, and loses half its sweetness when unshared.

Before taking credit to ourselves for the possession of a tender and sympathetic nature, we should carefully analyze our feelings towards our neighbour, to discover whether they are quite free from the leaven of selfishness or envy. We are convinced that we pity the sorrows of the poor and ardently desire for all humanity an unbroken prosperity. But what of our attitude towards those who are prosperous? Are we indeed honestly glad of their immunity against the privations of poverty? Do we generously enter into their appreciation of the blessings they enjoy? Are we not rather inclined to be coldly critical, secretly envious or openly censorious when the privileges and luxuries within their reach come under our direct observation?

Again, we pretend to sympathize with the girl who is lonely, neglected, unloved. We think we would reverse those conditions if we had the power to do so. But what of the girl who is popular, and the centre of attraction wherever she appears? Are we frankly glad that she enjoys so many little social triumphs? Do we let her perceive that her happiness is a source of real gratification to us? To be honest, are we not sometimes slightly, even considerably, irritated by a prominence which we fear may detract from our own importance?

An intimate friend or a member of our own household receives a beautiful gift, a tempting invitation, or becomes the object of flattering attentions on the part of some person of distinction. Do we enter cordially into her pleasure, and do our best to secure for her the fullest enjoyment of her opportunity? Very regrettably must we admit that the most intimate friend, a sister, or even a mother cannot always be depended upon for the sympathy and support absolutely needed to complete one's happiness in the hour of success or

triumph. Were all known, the history of many families would reveal sad stories of bright prospects marred and fond hopes blighted by just this defect of sympathy on the part of near and dear ones. The opportunity that to one, would have been the turning-point leading to love or distinction, was, by the selfishness of another, cruelly denied or appropriated to other uses.

Such selfishness is indefensible. A proper sense of dignity and independence should preserve us from coveting pleasures and advantages which we have not personally earned or otherwise secured by our own unaided efforts. We should be generous enough to let every one else be happy in his or her own way, and if we cannot actually hasten the process, at least we should scorn to take a shabby advantage of our propinquity or kinship to frustrate the kind intentions of more liberal-minded persons.

Let us then beware of a too complacent belief in the tenderness of our hearts until we have indisputably proven ourselves sincerely sympathetic towards our family and friends, not only in time of sickness and sorrow, but more particularly when success, fortune, or preferment has lifted them a degree or two above our own level.



LI

HIDDEN BEAUTY.

Things looked at patiently from one side after another, generally end by showing a side that is beautiful.

—R. L. Stevenson.

IT is characteristic of the ignorant mind to manifest haste in pronouncing on the merits or demerits of persons or things submitted to it for judgment. Education and experience invariably teach restraint in this direction. The greatest experts in special branches of human knowledge hesitate before committing themselves to definite expressions of opinion regarding matters coming within the provinces regarded as peculiarly their own. Whatever facts, indications or circumstances are presented to them for examination, must be carefully weighed and compared before a satisfactory conclusion can be reached. But the untrained mind, impatient of such preliminary processes, and absurdly self-confident, accords to first impressions the value of indisputable proofs and pronounces dictatorially on the goodness or the badness, the beauty or the ugliness, the worth or the uselessness of objects, ideas or personalities upon which its attention has for a few moments been lightly focussed. Such rash utterances, of course, have no weight with thinking persons, but the habit of giving expression to them works incalculable injury to the mind from which they proceed. The habit of careful observation, the faculty for serious

criticism, are of course, incompatible with this grave defect of superficiality, to all who may be accused of which, the fountains of true knowledge must remain forever sealed.

Perhaps nowhere is the truth of the lines quoted above more strikingly illustrated, as regards material objects, than in the studio. To the eye of an artist, beauty appears in a thousand shapes that elude the observation of an ordinary spectator. Form and colour, light and shadow, arrangement and expression in their innumerable variations and gradations offer well-nigh inexhaustible sources of enjoyment to one who perceives their artistic value or possibilities. Such power of perception may be inherent to some, but it is susceptible of cultivation in all. A course of serious study at an art school wonderfully develops in an apt pupil the faculty of recognizing beauty in the midst of the most common-place surroundings. It teaches him that what at first sight appear to be uninteresting features are in reality so expressive of power, pathos, or sweetness as to justify the most loving and painstaking reproduction on canvas. It reveals to him the worthlessness of much that was formerly admired, and inevitably establishes in his mind a sense of the infinite superiority of natural over artificial effects. Soon he begins to manifest an impatience of superfluous detail, as for instance, in portraiture, he rejects unnecessary draperies, and frivolous ornaments as being unworthy subjects for a noble art. The uninformed in art will suspect him of lax morality, because in some instances he appears to carry this process of elimination beyond the bounds of modesty. But in reality he is more often urged by an innate love of beauty which informs him that the exquisite curves of a woman's arm and shoulders are incomparably more lovely than the meaningless puffs and furbelows of satin or chiffon with which the dressmaker disguises them

into shapes that are often grotesque and even monstrous. A day will come, no doubt, when the study of beauty, which is the highest expression of God's handiwork, will be deemed an essential part of an ordinary education. How greatly the sum of human happiness would be increased thereby can only be guesed by those who have already experienced the joys that proceed from an intimate acquaintance with the loveliness of created things.

The artistic temperament, more than any other, is adapted to meet all the changes and changes of life with equanimity, because of the inexhaustible sources of enjoyment open to it through its keen appreciation of beauty. There is a rather wide-spread impression among the people that the pursuit of art is for the favoured few. But this erroneous idea must give way before the evidence furnished by the lives of some of the most famous artists, who won their way to distinction from positive starvation. To become a great artist, it is, of course, necessary to be endowed with extraordinary gifts, but to no moderately intelligent person is denied the ability to acquire a sufficient insight into the nature of art to create for him an entirely new horizon, new ideals, and lifelong sources of purest pleasure. The first step in the direction of this most desirable goal is to acquire the habit of "looking patiently at things from one side after another" until the beauty of them lies revealed. This is the alphabet of art and the rest follows in due order.



TOLERATION.

*So many Gods, so many creeds,
So many paths that wind and wind ;
While just the art of being kind
Is what the sad world needs.*

—Selected.

MORE harm is done, perhaps, to the cause of religion every day throughout the world by the attitude which professing Christians assume towards those who differ from them in belief, than even by the callousness of tepid souls, or the hostility of the avowed enemies of the Church. Indeed, it is more than probable that the Church would have no enemies at all if its sacred character were not so often used as a shield for the most deplorable human weaknesses and passions.

In our day, it is true, sectional strife is less violent and bitter than it used to be, and the methods once resorted to by religious bodies to secure conformity to their forms of belief, would not now, thank Heaven, be tolerated in any civilized community. But deep-rooted prejudices and a dormant hostility still linger in the breasts of many so-called Christians, inclining them to regard with suspicion and even positive hatred the followers of doctrines different from theirs. Worse still it is made a part of the religious (?) education of innocent little children, to plant the seeds and foster

the growth in their young hearts, of the same bitter and hostile feelings that enter into their parents' conceptions of fidelity to an inherited creed.

I have seen the faces of women reputed to be devout members of their respective churches, darken with an expression of pure malevolence, at the mere sound of the name of an opposing sect, and I have heard them openly exult over some misfortune or scandal that had brought sorrow and humiliation on another fold. It is the children of such parents as these who forfeit all the sweet attractiveness of childhood by learning to deride and mimic in public, the ministers or members of churches other than their own. The mud-throwing method of dealing with an adversary is the most easily acquired of all, and the children of sectarian parents show a regrettable tendency to adopt it. The blame, of course, lies on their elders, who not only refrain from reproof of such unbecoming conduct, but tacitly, if not openly, encourage it.

"And these are Christians?" is the commentary one is forced to make on witnessing this frequently recurring spectacle of religious, or rather irreligious strife. But no, indeed, these are not Christians; they have no claim to the title of true followers of the gentle Nazarene who loved all sinners, Jew or Gentile, with an excess of divine tenderness to which the greatest effort of human love can but faintly approach. These ill-judged, narrow sectarians, who choose to play the Pharisee's part, have nothing in common with the broad charity and generous zeal for souls that distinguishes the real disciples of the Master.

Vast sums of money are expended yearly to support foreign missions in distant countries, and it is to be feared that many contributors to this enormous fund have a complacent sense of duty fulfilled which absolves them from all further obligation to their neighbours.

They disdain to work in the missionary field at their own door. They profess to love the heathen—who is at a safe distance, and does not expect to be invited to dinner—but they frankly hate, and avoid all contact with the non-conforming multitude at their doors. The Episcopalian despises and ignores his Methodist neighbour ; the Presbyterian harbours suspicion and dislike against the Roman Catholic element of the community; the Unitarian is shunned by all members of orthodox churches, and so on. Yet all are children of one Father, and the soul of one is not a whit more precious in His sight than the soul of another.

Especially in small towns and country places are these lines of demarcation rigidly drawn, and held to be sufficient justification for many a grave lapse from charity, justice and truth. In larger cities, circumstances often conspire to bring together under one roof, or in daily business or social relations, men and women professing a variety of beliefs, and invariably the honesty of facts wins the day over inherited animosities, and a more liberal, tolerant spirit is bred in those who had previously hated and distrusted one another. They gradually learn that it is “just the art of being kind” that “the sad world needs.” Truly, there is no surer indication of real spiritual progress than daily practice of the religion of kindness. Its principles rest securely on the golden rule. Its followers do not ask of every new-comer “What belief do you profess?” before committing themselves to a friendly attitude, but rather, “In what way can I help you over the rough places of life, my brother?” And whether by speech or silence, by thoughtful action or the tactful “letting alone” which is a more powerful agent for good than many suspect, the generous heart is always ready to love and assist any fellow-creature according to his needs.

A large number of my readers live in small places,

where sectional differences probably run high. Each may, therefore, find an incentive at hand to cultivate "the art of being kind," extending her good influence beyond the narrow precincts of her own particular fold, and in this manner inspiring those without it with respect for it. Until she can shake hands in sincerely friendly fashion with well-meaning members of any sect, remembering that equal chances of salvation are offered to every believing heart, let her not call herself a Christian, nor presume to thank the Lord that she is not like other women.



LIII

EASTER THOUGHTS.

*I hold it truth, with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.*

—In Memoriam.

THE joyful season of Resurrection is at hand. In the natural as well as in the spiritual world, the time has come for the quickening of new life in all things, for the shedding of old garments, for emerging from darkness, cold and gloom, into brilliant sunshine and genial air. The most hardened heart is not proof against the subtle tenderness and riant gladness of Easter. We may or may not feel a desire to be clothed anew, like the flowers, but even if we churlishly resist for a time, the influences at work all around us, we must eventually be shamed into doing our part, when we see ourselves such sorry exceptions to the universal law. It is better then, to recognize at once, the necessity of a personal resurrection and to prepare ourselves in humble sincerity to "rise on stepping-stones of our dead selves to higher things."

A sudden and radical conversion is an experience not to be hoped for by the many. Human vices and weaknesses have their roots too deep in the character to be weeded out by a single day's work. We are apt, on great occasions, to over-estimate our own moral

strength, to let ourselves be carried away by a kind of spiritual exaltation, through the medium of which the future looks all serene and impervious to temptation. It is easy under such an influence, to make fine resolutions. Alas! we have barely crossed the threshold of our own peaceful chamber, when we are brought into such rude contact with the workaday world that all our beautiful resolves vanish into thin air, and all the hateful old passions we thought we had subjugated completely, are rampant once more. In the humiliation that follows a sense of defeat, we are apt to give up trying to do better. We would be more successful if we could school ourselves to realize that the conditions of yesterday will repeat themselves to-morrow, and that religious fervour is one thing and moral discipline another. A long prayer in the solitude of one's chamber is of less avail than a brief invocation for help in the moment of temptation. The most heroic resolve has not a fraction of the value of the smallest assured victory over self. To bear one's self patiently when rebuked or criticized ; to relinquish some cherished purpose, even a devout or charitable one, with a good grace, if so required ; to forbear from commenting on an unkind act or speech ; to perform a distasteful task with simple courage and without hope of praise ; to suffer others, less worthy, to be commended while one's self is forgotten or ignored : these are surer proofs of a new spirit than any of what might be called the professional pieties which, in the imagination of many women, constitute the higher life. This process of attaining perfection is necessarily slow, but it is the only sure one.

“Heaven is not gained at a single bound.”

We must beware then, of exaggerated religious fervour which blinds us to our real moral status, and

retards, instead of forwarding our spiritual growth, and rather strive in calm humility to determine what shall be the first stepping-stone on which we may rise to higher things. From stone to stone, we must be content to advance year by year, until haply, we shall have reached the summit of our aspirations before the last call comes. The grave shall have no terrors for us then, for our eyes shall see beyond it and discern only the joy and glory of a happy resurrection.



AN EASTER MYSTERY.

Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

—St. Mark, xvi., 9.

 F surpassing interest to women is the fact set down without comment in the Gospels, that the glorious and stupendous miracle of the Resurrection was first revealed to one of their sex. A subject for deep meditation, truly. Had it even been the Virgin Mother, so loving and patient, so deeply tried by suffering, or the other Mary, her faithful companion and comforter, for whom this signal honour had been reserved, there would be less matter for surprise. But that of all women, the risen Saviour's choice of a first confidante should have fallen on Mary Magdalene, whose name had been a by-word among men, whose only title to distinction was that she had "loved much" and repented sincerely of sins which, to this day, the world never forgives in a woman—this other mystery of Easter morning, subverted the social order no less effectually than the Resurrection subverted the order of nature.

These are things to ponder deeply in our hearts. No doubt there were women in Judea who, having lived blameless lives in the eyes of the world, held themselves far above the converted courtesan : who would

have refused to speak to her or receive her into their houses. Yet none of all these were so acceptable in Jesus' sight as the one who had, from the moment of knowing Him, loved Him enough to relinquish her sinful ways, and devote her whole life thereafter to His faithful service.

Is it not clear that there are sins no less hateful in His eyes than those which the world refuses to condone under any circumstances. May it not be that pride, vanity, anger, envy, malice, deceit, covetousness and evil speaking estrange us more effectually from Him than even those frailties we are in the habit of regarding as the only unpardonable ones?

Before the dawn of Easter morning it will be well for each of us to try and measure accurately our own unworthiness to greet the risen Saviour, not according to the false and prideful standard of a mammon-worshipping and pharisaical world, but according to the all-seeing eye of a just Saviour, who recognizes the humble and contrite heart under however lowly an exterior it is concealed.



THE SOUL'S STANDARD.

*This is to live in truth,
To plant against the passion's dark control
The spirit's birthright of immortal youth,
The simple standard of the soul.*

—Archibald Lampman.

EASTER is pre-eminently the festival of all others which appeals to the elder half of humanity.

This, because it is so full of boundless hope and promise. Christmas, with its gifts and its goodies, is a happy time for the youngsters, chiefly. We who have found out that a generous fare and a collection of pretty, but generally useless baubles can, in the main affect our happiness but transiently and in the most insignificant degree, no longer feel the thrill of excitement which the mere name of Christmas once had power to produce in us. But Easter has a deeper spiritual significance ; it makes a more intimate, personal appeal to each of us. We are not now asked to expend our every thought and effort in devising pleasant surprises for others. The more serious task devolves on us of communing with our own souls, searching our consciences, and seeking to discern wherein we have failed to correspond with the opportunities afforded us for self-improvement, for purposeful living. We are apt to be impatient of such questionings. It may be there are little dark places in our souls which we shrink from uncovering, or perhaps we have an uneasy sense that our past life, viewed as a whole, compares but sorrily with certain shining records

of unselfishness and noble achievement that we know of. The round in which we have been moving may look pitifully narrow and mean beside the broader orbit of a more generous and earnest life.

But is it not better to face the unflattering comparison, to acknowledge our vanity, our selfishness, our uselessness, and for once, humbly realize that we have sadly misused the splendid gift of existence, than to go on forever shirking an obvious duty, perpetually excusing ourselves on one plea or another from an effort at sincere reformation, and so letting the years slip by irretrievably without doing anything to prove ourselves worthy of the priceless favours bestowed upon us? Shall we not, in this beautiful season of re-creation, help our aspiring soul to burst through the outer shell of indifference, of conventionality, of bondage to habit and custom, of servile fear of criticism, that has so long cramped and confined it as in a narrow prison-house? The spirit clamours for its "birthright of immortal youth." The sap of a new season is rising in our veins, and tender little buds of lovely new virtues are swelling under the tough bark of our old habits and callousness. Shall they not be permitted to blossom and bear fruit?

"The simple standard of the soul," is, indeed, the only one worth living by. Cease, then, to fret over the complexities of laws which you are in no sense bound to obey. Be nobly independent of those who would seek to abridge your liberty of spirit by imposing artificial conditions or obligations upon you. Seek only those things that fill the heart with enduring joy, and leave the mind at peace with itself. The rest is all vanity. Let it go without a pang of useless regret. Thus may the Eastertide be rendered glorious by a new miracle of resurrection for each one of us!

THE FAMILY.

A well regulated family is the most beautiful piece of machinery in the universe, as well as the most important. There is nothing in the world that requires more executive ability and exquisite tact, and nothing that is more worthy of being well done.

—Selected.

 **FAMILY** is a nation in epitome. In the virtue and the strength of families, lies the virtue and the strength of the nation. When we remember that the entire human race has sprung from one single family, an approximate idea of the immense importance of the family can be formed. The average mother does not realize this importance, nor the weight of responsibility it entails. It is by no means uncommon to hear a wife and mother say that she has no life of her own, that she is cut off from participation in the occupations and pastimes which make other women's lives so interesting, by the fact that she has a family which absorbs all her time and attention. This statement is often made regretfully, sometimes even resentfully, as if the fact alluded to was regarded as a misfortune, or a grievance.

To the woman who has missed the high honour and holy joy of motherhood, this attitude of her more fortunate sister must ever be a profound mystery.

A woman who is not happy in her own family would never be happy anywhere. Her nature does not go deep enough for real happiness. She is unable to grasp great ideas, to regard her life as a whole, as a something

whereby she is related to all mankind, of past and future ages. In her children she sees, alas! only so many obstacles to the gratification of her own personal, trivial, selfish aims. She loves them best when they become instruments that minister to her vanity, when they attract notice in high quarters, or when they begin to reveal the possession of powers and attainments that will ensure them an honourable, or, in any sense, prominent place in the world. But in their society as her children, simply, she takes no delight. It is her pleasure rather to delegate as many of her maternal functions as possible to hired strangers, or to any other substitute who may be available.

The dawning of the infant mind, the gradual development of the physical and moral peculiarities which go to produce a new individuality, somehow fail to inspire her with the absorbing interest they possess for the woman who thinks and feels. A sense of the plastic nature of a child, and of her own power and duty to mould it in the loveliest shapes, is unfelt by her, or if vaguely apprehended, it is seldom made a subject of earnest thought or heartfelt prayer. The extent of her influence in the home, the far-reaching results of her educational methods, or her neglect of them, the wonderful possibilities which the future holds for her offspring, or which it shall withhold, according to the degree of their fitness, as they leave their mother's side, these are not the considerations that occupy her thoughts and exercise her judgment, and guide her ambitions from day to day.

Obviously, it is little short of a crime for any woman to assume maternal responsibilities unless she is prepared to discharge them in a conscientious manner; unless she can estimate the full value of the privileges attached to the high office of maternity; unless she proposes to create a home and to found a family which

will be at once a credit to herself and an ornament to the nation, a carefully-planned, well-governed organization, the safeguarding of which from inimical influences will be to her a holy trust, an object to which all others will be secondary. Unless she can make a solemn covenant in her heart with God to do all this in gratitude for the precious boon of motherhood, it would be better for her that she should never bring a child into the world.

The mother who bestows on her children the right kind and measure of affection and attention is never troubled by the thought of joys outside the home which her duties within make inaccessible to her. She realizes that of all possible human joys, the one vouchsafed to her is the highest, the purest, the most enduring. In reality, it is she who is to be envied, not the idle, pleasure-loving, childless woman, who, however free from care her life may be, is beyond doubt at heart dissatisfied with its emptiness.

Perhaps some mothers who read this have hitherto failed to appreciate their own dignity and importance. Perhaps they have not yet definitely proposed to themselves to bring up their families on lines which will distinguish them from those that are left to bring themselves up, in a manner, without plan or purpose ; but I trust that the greater number only need a prompting word to awaken their ambition and stimulate their activities in the right direction. Success of other kinds may be unattainable by many, but to no mother who seriously applies herself to the task will be denied the crowning glory of a well-regulated family. She who achieves this much need look for no higher title to fame. But none may hope to achieve it except she is willing to put her whole heart in the effort.

LVII

THE BEST WAY.

There is always a best way of doing everything, if it be but to boil an egg. —Emerson.

“IFE is a great bundle of little things,” as the Autoocrat of the Breakfast-Table wisely remarks. We are all apt, however, to grow impatient over the very littleness of the things that go to make up our separate lives, forgetting that the measure of our faithfulness in small things is the surest proof of our capacity for greater endeavour. The girl who does not know how to boil an egg properly, or make a good cup of coffee, though these simple tasks are a portion of her daily duty, sighs for wider spheres wherein to exercise the latent talents of which she believes herself possessed. She does not realise that almost every function in life, however exalted, calls for the identical qualities of exactness, thoroughness and method which make a well-ordered kitchen a source of comfort and even happiness to the family depending on its operations. If a woman believes herself to be superior in intelligence to those around her, let her demonstrate the fact not by looking for impossible worlds to conquer, but by doing those things that lie nearest her hand in such a way that she becomes a guide and an inspiration to others. We have nearly all experienced something of the discomfort that is

wrought in the home as a result of neglected or carelessly performed domestic duties. If it be only that the porridge is burned or the toast cold at breakfast, even so little a thing will get on the nerves of an entire family, and often lead to most grievous results, all of which would have been obviated by the necessary degree of attention on the part of the cook.

It should therefore be our ambition to do everything well, however trifling it may be, remembering that life is made up of little things and that to produce a fair whole, all the parts must be perfect of their kind, and fitted harmoniously one into the other.



LVIII

THE ART OF ENJOYMENT.

Education is needed not only to help us do our work ; it is also needed to help us to enjoy our leisure.

—W. E. H. Lecky.

 **N**a well-ordered life a considerable portion of time is always set apart for pure enjoyment. Among the educated classes especially, some form of healthy recreation is recognized as a daily necessity, and provision for the same is made with as much gravity as attends the ordering of meals or other household matters of equal moment.

Pleasure, to be all that the name implies, must, in a certain sense be taken seriously, that is, it should be raised to the dignity of an art, and pursued with love and pride. In the matter of the selection of particular pleasures individuals must be guided by personal tastes, qualifications, means and opportunities, but no man or woman, in however straitened circumstances, is completely debarred from all sources of pure, healthy enjoyment. An endless variety offers itself to those who desire to make choice of a favourite pastime. The regrettable fact, in this connection, is not the scarcity of materials or opportunities so much as the dulness and apathy of the many who refuse to avail themselves of either, and who are content to lead work-a-day, common-place lives, in which positive enjoyment, in any shape, is an absolutely unknown quantity. Men are less open to reproach on this score than women. Out-

door sports and games of all kinds have no lack of votaries among the stronger sex. The women of the well-to-do classes also, pretty generally recognize the dignity of play. Even those who fill the highest social positions, and are burdened with numerous and ever recurring claims on their time, far exceeding in number and urgency the demands made on the average housekeeper, contrive to attain and keep up a certain proficiency in riding, skating, curling, fencing, tennis, basket-ball, rowing, golf, or whatever other form of healthy recreation excites in them a real interest.

Of late years the bicycle and the camera have done much to widen the possibilities of enjoyment for women who are more or less cut off from the advantages enjoyed by their wealthier sisters. But there are still large numbers on the farms and in the small towns who lead hopelessly dull lives because they do not know how to enjoy themselves, and apparently, do not care to learn.

I hope there are no longer any parents so narrow-minded as to bring up their sons and daughters on the principle that pleasure and idleness are synonymous terms. Indeed, if such there still be it is time they should learn that there are forms of industry, which, weighed against some forms of amusement, are positively harmful, and therefore to be severely condemned. For instance, to keep a young girl indoors sewing, or attending to other household duties the whole of a bright, beautiful day, is to defraud her of her rightful share in the blessings of the sunshine, the pure air, and other healthful, refining influences of nature. Growing children too, are shut up during the best hours of the day in badly ventilated schoolrooms, and hardly are they liberated from such disagreeable confinement than they are compelled to go back to their books to prepare the next day's lessons.

Some mothers need to realize that a sound and vigorous physical constitution is a much more valuable possession to the young than an abnormal development of the intellect, or a surprising degree of manual skill. So both boys and girls should have their due allowance of play-time, and this should not be suspended as they develop into young men and maids, nor even after they have crossed the Rubicon of matrimony.

The frequent and melancholy cases of insanity that occur among farmers' wives would soon diminish if pleasant recreation was made a regular feature of life on the farm. Some form of active exercise is most highly to be recommended to those who need a wholesome stimulus to enjoyment. This is the real invigorator and rejuvenator. The woman who habitually plays tennis or golf, who takes long rides or walks, or otherwise spends much time in out-door exercise invariably keeps her youth till long past the period which relegates other women to the ranks of the middle-aged or the old. And it is when this period is reached that many a woman is found bitterly reproaching herself for having ruthlessly sacrificed her most precious possessions of health and comeliness to what, when too late, she perceives to have been a mistaken idea of duty.

While there is yet time, let all who can do so, learn to enjoy their leisure, and, if necessary, create leisure where none has hitherto existed. This is the precious and indisputable right of every living creature.



FLOWER OR FRUIT.

The souls of refined women seek, like the bee, only the blossoms and flowers of life; those of coarser nature, like the wasp, seek only fruit.

—Jean Paul Richter.

HE various opportunities and experiences of life have different values for all to whom they come. The estimate placed on them, individually, by men and women, are a nearly infallible indication of the degree of intelligence, education and refinement which they have attained. The occasion which, to one, brings rare enjoyment, finds another bored or impatient. Pleasure and penance become convertible terms according to the tastes or moods of participants in a particular occupation or pastime.

Some women fail to reap satisfaction or enjoyment from any source which is not one of palpable, positive gain to themselves. These, like the wasps, are looking only for the fruit, they care nothing for the delicate fragrant buds and blossoms of life. For the sake of a material advantage, to assist at a fashionable entertainment, to make the acquaintance of some person socially more important than themselves, to display their fine clothes, or to secure a bargain, they will sacrifice many precious hours, undergo any amount of inconvenience. But ask them to walk half a mile to see a splendid view, to purchase a new book of poems, to attend an art exhibi-

bition, or a good concert, or even to read a thoughtful editorial in the daily paper, and you are told they have no time, they have no money, they are tired, they are busy—always some excuse, unless they are frank enough to own the truth—namely, that all these things are to natures like theirs only a weariness.

There is something pitiful in a condition of mind which recognizes no good in anything that does not increase one's earthly possessions, or importance. To keep out of such a fatal slough, one needs only to observe all the beautiful sights and benign influences that surround us in daily life, and to weigh the permanence of the joy they yield us against the fleeting satisfactions derived from the pursuit of purely temporal and selfish ends. A woman to whom wealth, position, and worldly pleasures are the sole objects in life—when these fail her—is left truly destitute ; but she who has learned to love and take her chief pleasure in nature, art, music, poetry,—who shall deprive her of the things that make life in the highest sense rich, beautiful and happy ?

It is well to keep this test of the real value of things in mind from day to day, and apply it as it becomes necessary to choose between two opportunities, one of which offers a material, the other a purely educational or spiritual gain. The former cannot always be despised, more's the pity, but let us at least be on our guard against a too constant readiness to barter permanent possessions and pleasures for those that are merely temporary. Our real worth, remember, is appraised not by what we have, but by what we are.

LX

JUDGE NOT.

*Judge not your fellow-man's condition
Until you be in his position.*

—Talmud.

To sit in judgment on a friend or neighbour is a task highly congenial to the average mortal. One may travel far and fail to find a man, much less, I fear, a woman who, being asked to pronounce a verdict on the conduct of another, will modestly refrain from expressing an opinion, urging that he or she is scarcely qualified to speak with authority in such a matter. The temptation to assume a judicial air and to earn a reputation for great wisdom or superior virtue is too strong for most of us. With incredible rashness, we are ready to pass an arbitrary sentence on the prisoner at the bar without having so much as glanced at the evidence for the defence.

Such egregious vanity would merely excite amusement were it not so mischievous in its effects. Reputation, the most precious possession of man or woman, is also the most sensitive and perishable. How often does it not suffer grievous injury at the hands of these self-constituted and one-sided judges of human frailty. Among the greatest sinners in this respect are many who probably consider themselves saints, professing Christians who are ever ready to throw up their hands in horror at the merest hint of delinquency on the part

of a friend or neighbour. It is not the Christ-like prayer, "Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they do," that comes most readily to their lips, but the Pharisee's "Lord, I thank thee that I am not like unto these." They quite forget that He whom they profess to imitate, loved sinners and wept over them, but never slandered or spurned them. How far removed from this divine charity is the attitude assumed towards an erring sister by the woman who holds herself, or thinks she does, above reproach! Let us, who have all our lives been safe-guarded by the sweetest and holiest influences against all knowledge of or contact with evil, let us not be too stern in our judgments of our less fortunate sisters. What do we know of the force of temptation, of the hatefulness of some lives, from which any kind of escape is dearly welcome? As we are thankful for our own mercies, let us be pitiful towards those unacquainted with similar favours. However little, or however great, the fault cited to us, can not we at least be charitably silent if we have not the prayer or the tear ready that should rise to the lips and eyes of perfect Christians at the thought of sin, at the sight of a sinner. Taking the wise maxim from the Talmud well to heart, let us resolve to practise that beautiful discretion in speech, and even in thought, which respects the feelings and reputations of others too sincerely to consent to inflict the least hurt on either.



SELF-RELIANCE.

God has not created us to throw us away as a failure.
—George Macdonald.

BELIEF in one's self, in one's capacity for doing some kind of work well, and not only well, but better than any one else can do it, is the surest foundation for success in life. Any moderately intelligent man or woman, surveying the whole broad field of human labour, should be able to determine what task is best suited to his or her strength, attainments and resources. This point settled, ultimate success or failure hinges largely on the amount of concentration, energy, enthusiasm and perseverance brought to bear on the work attempted. The reason so few rise above mediocrity, that so many end in failure, is simply that they have too little conscience and too little joy in their work. They are too eager to be done with it to claim the promised reward. They do not realize that

“Joy's soul lies in the doing.”

The other day I watched a boot-blacker plying his trade at a fashionable boot-maker's. A humble calling, surely, and at first I felt a kind of pang to see such a stalwart young fellow on his knees brushing the dirt of the streets from the shoes of his fellow-men. But as I watched him perform his lowly task, systematically, thoroughly, even, as it neared completion, lov-

ingly, the kind of contempt I had felt for his avocation yielded to a feeling of interest and admiration, and when I saw that because he detected one little dull spot on the shining surface of the boot he had so carefully polished, he, of his own accord, began the task all over again, applying fresh blacking and wielding his brushes and polishing rag with a light and dexterous touch that told of the pleasure he took in his work, I conceived for him the kind of respect which one always feels for those from whom one has learned a valuable lesson. Thus it is that the faithful performance of even the lowliest task may become a power for good in the world and an example to many who, with all the advantages of superior education and opportunities, need just such an object lesson to bring home to them the innate beauty and sacredness of work and the intrinsic value of the faithful worker. One would sooner trust a successful boot-black in an emergency calling for care and conscience in work than the dabbler in art, music or letters who has attempted impossibilities and failed miserably. We all have it in us to succeed. God has not created us to throw us away as a failure, but we must learn the measure of our capacity and be content with the success that comes within its bounds.



POTENTIAL VIRTUES.

That which is best in you is your appreciation of what is better than you. —I. T. Lynch.

THE mere fact that certain qualities and virtues in others excite your admiration, proves that the same virtues or qualities exist, in embryo at least, in the foundations of your own character.

I have great hopes of any girl who will not permit herself to be blinded by prejudice, envy or jealousy, to the mental or moral superiority of another girl, but who is frankly willing to be helped by the example of such a one. But she who is annoyed or irritated when a friend, or even a sister, is too highly praised, who cannot refrain from the "but" and the "if" intended to offset a complimentary remark, or who secretly suspects all the good and clever people she knows of hypocrisy and affectation—for her indeed there is little hope. In vain you may probe a nature like hers in search of those sweet womanly attributes without which our sex is robbed of all its charm, namely, charity, gentleness, patience, loyalty, straightforwardness in dealing, honesty of speech, tenderness and sympathy in the hour of trouble.

We have therefore made a very good start in the right direction when we have learned to appreciate in others that which is better than ourselves. From admiring we soon learn to imitate the virtues of others, and in time we may even ourselves become worthy of imitation.

LXIII

WHAT MAKES LIFE INTERESTING.

He never has a good time that lives only that he may have a good time. —Lyman Abbott.

TIS a well known fact that busy people are never bored ; only those who have an abundance of leisure and are free to choose their own occupations and pleasures ever suffer from the distressing malady of *ennui*, or not knowing what to do with themselves and their opportunities.

The majority of the women who are compelled to live in the small towns and country places complain of the intolerable dulness of their surroundings, and long to make their life more varied and interesting. Much, I fear, that the greater number of these discontented ones lack energy and ambition to strike out in new paths that would broaden their mental horizon and yield them high and lasting pleasure. They have a vague longing for "a good time," as if all time were not good, the better, because the more precious as we grow older. We have only to bestir ourselves, and we can have a good time all the year round. The reason small towns are so dull is because the people are so uninteresting, but the reason they are uninteresting is because they are not interested in what is going on in the world, and which should be of as much concern to them as to the denizens of the largest cities. Remoteness from the great centres of civilization is no longer

an excuse for growing rusty, since good books and newspapers are so cheap and postal arrangements so satisfactory. Some of the most distinguished writers and artists of our day have voluntarily elected to live in seclusion, yet for all that have kept themselves closely in touch with the great throbbing heart of the world.

Read, study, think, observe, work, there you have the complete formula for achieving the kind of personal distinction that will make you not only interesting to others but interesting to yourself, so that your own society will never bore you, and no day or evening will be so long as to exhaust the resources you will find at your command. No listless moping around waiting for the "good time" that never comes, no aimless and envious watching of other lives that seem more varied and richer in pleasant experiences than your own—this is fatal. Look inward rather, find out your tastes, talents, aspirations, and give them all a chance. Read what others, even more heavily handicapped than you, have done by industry and perseverance. Then, on to your goal, with a steady determination to win, and you will be surprised some day to discover how much you are enjoying your life and how little time you have to trouble yourself about matters which do not concern you, or which formerly were sources of jealousy and irritation.



THE TELL-TALE COUNTENANCE.

The clock of thy face should be set by the dial of thy heart.

EVERY human being carries about with him an open letter of recommendation—or of condemnation—which observant eyes are quick to scrutinize before accepting any other credentials he may have to offer. The characters inscribed in it are so plain that a child, nay, even a dog, may read them. The human face, especially when in repose, is indeed nearly, if not quite, an infallible index to the soul. Each separate feature reveals some inner grace and virtue, or accuses the owner of weakness or vicious propensity. However closely we may think we guard the secrets of our heart, we are, in fact, at the mercy of those too legible lines and tell-tale expressions of countenance which turn traitor to us in the very moments when we most strenuously desire concealment.

There is but one way to avoid such embarrassing self-betrayals, and that is to refuse to harbour sentiments or encourage tendencies in the secrecy of our souls, which we would blush to acknowledge before a censorious world.

In our youth we are much given to complain of the niggardly endowment of beauty which nature has bestowed upon us. We think, could we but have chosen our own form and features, how different the result would have been! We fail to realize, often until it is too late, that it is indeed in the power of each individual to make his or her face beautiful or otherwise.

Some day we look in the glass and are dismayed to see that certain distiguring little lines around the eyes and mouth have plainly come to stay. How much unrestrained anger or jealousy, how much undisciplined sorrow, or deliberate worry over trifles do not these unwelcome marks represent! Perhaps some of them because of a covetous and grasping disposition, of a selfish and inquisitive, or an irritable and vindictive one. There is, maybe, a scornful curl of the lip, too, which lends the face a disagreeable expression not to be disguised even with smiles and laughter. Or our eyes may have acquired a habit of shifting uneasily and quickly from one object to another, proof of a suspicious or dishonest nature. Or it may be the smirk of self-complacency, the affected meekness of hypocrisy, or the obliteration of all intelligence and nobility from the face, the result of gluttony and coarse living which betrays us. In one form or another, the record of our past life will surely be written on our countenance.

Fortunate, indeed, is the woman who brings to the age of maturity a face that attests a serene and beautiful girlhood. The unlined brow, the clear truthful eyes, the tender mouth, the nobility, purity and sweetness that are stamped upon all the features constitute a kind of beauty before which mere conventional types of physical perfection fade into insignificance.

To young girls this thought should especially commend itself as one of the most serious import during the formative period of their lives. If they would be beautiful, let all their thoughts, words and deeds be beautiful, and let them, as far as possible, influence others to follow their example. By faithfully following this advice, they will discover an inestimable source of happiness which they will not only enjoy themselves, but also diffuse unconsciously from their presence wherever they may go.

LXV

THE UNPROFITABLENESS OF GRIEF.

A life without joy passes away unprofitably, shedding around it only gloom and sorrow.

—Gold Dust.

T is the privilege of those who are visited by some great affliction, loss or disappointment, to retire for a time into seclusion, and give themselves up to the full realization of the misfortune that has befallen them.

True sympathy will not intrude on them in those first dark hours, when the soul must needs wrestle alone with its sorrow, but holds reverently aloof awaiting the propitious time to offer its gentle ministrations to the suffering spirit. No one of feeling will deny this much kindly consideration to a brother or sister chastised by pain or humbled by defeat. But when the night of affliction threatens to prolong itself into a settled gloom of months and even years ; when, regardless of other claims, the grieving heart gives itself up to the contemplation of its own bereavement or deprivation, and refuses to look above or beyond it for comfort and cheer, then no longer does it appeal to the active sympathy and forbearance of even the most faithful friend. The most generous among us have not so much love and sympathy to spare that we can lavish it incessantly on one object, to the exclusion of others no less dear and worthy. We must give now to one, now to another,

and there is a sympathy of smiles as well as of tears ; life has its happy surprises as well as its unforeseen disasters, and we fail as much in our duty to others in refusing to share their joys as in keeping aloof from them in their hours of sorest need. So, when we have mourned awhile with the suffering, and offered them what comfort we know, we turn, with a free conscience, to scenes of light and laughter, where other hearts crowned with joy, invite us to bear them cheerful company.

The mourner should not take it amiss when the welcome tide of sympathy begins to ebb—rather, this sign should be construed as a reminder that the time for useless grieving is past, and that life's invitations to be happy once more should not be disregarded. “Life without joy passes away unprofitably, shedding around it only gloom and sorrow.” Who among us will choose to exercise the melancholy and thankless function of screening the sunshine from other lives. Come what may, we must resolve not to live without joy of one kind or another.

There is an endless variety of choice, something to suit each one's needs and capacity, enough and to spare to give colour and zest to every life. There is the joy of being, of doing, of having, of knowing, of loving, of being loved, of giving and receiving, even of renouncing and denying one's self for others. There are the joys of youth and of age, of the simple fireside, and of the world of intellect and of fashion, of the sweet country and of the busy metropolis, of obscurity and of renown. We have but to claim our own and take it to our hearts and make the most of it, however little it may seem compared with what is assigned to others. In this way only shall we live profitably, imparting cheer and courage to hearts that look to us for strength and guidance. Let it be said of us at least when we

pass out of this life that, though we had neither gold nor silver, yet of such as we had we gave generously to all, scattering freely on our path the greater riches of joy and good cheer, the superabundant sunshine that warmed and brightened our own lives.



SHINING AT HOME.

*Many who love to flash in public had better by far
shine at home.*

—Spurgeon.

THE family circle is the severest of all tribunals. Under its unsleeping and merciless scrutiny the most blameless character will sometimes be found wanting. It is in the privacy of home that the moral fibres most readily relax and that the true nature of the individual asserts itself through the veneer of the acquired virtues and qualities which one puts on, almost unconsciously, to face the world and win its applause. To "shine at home" is therefore an achievement which calls for the exercise of those virtues only which have their seat deep in the heart, and which constitute a noble nature. As it is much easier to flash in public, by merely assuming qualities which we have not, the temptation to do so is one from which few of us enjoy immunity. But it is the one against which we should struggle most persistently, as, to give way to it, means to undermine the most important and enduring foundations of character. Many resent the constant and unsparing criticism of the family circle, which, truth to tell, is often carried to an extent hardly less than exasperating ; yet that there is no more valuable school for the formation of character will be readily admitted by all who have undergone the discipline, and good-humouredly swallowed the snubs which their affectionate relatives have seen fit to bestow upon them. Better, however, than a determination to accept criticism and rebukes with patience, is one to avoid the occasions which lead up to such distasteful correction.

LXVII

LOOK FORWARD.

Your real life is not behind, but before you.

—Lyman Abbott.

O err is human—so, it is not surprising that, for the majority of mankind, the past becomes a bugbear, a melancholy, humiliating record of failures, disappointments, and blunders, the contemplation of which induces the deepest despondency and self-contempt. What comfort, then, lies in the thought that our real life is not behind, but before us. We are all born anew every day in the clean, pure atmosphere of an untried future, teeming with possibilities of happiness, of useful achievement, of honourable success! But how many of us realize this important fact, and take advantage of it to cast off the chains and shackles of our old foibles and vices, to avoid the old temptations, and choose new paths, higher aims, and purer pleasures? Try to think of it on waking and rising in the morning. Life is just beginning for you. Yesterday, with its pains and sorrows is dead and gone. Banish the remembrance of all that was sad and discouraging. Buckle on a fresh suit of moral armour, hope, courage, and high resolve, and go out to meet what the day has in store for you, stout-hearted and strong-handed, like Arthur's knights of old, determined to win, even through fire and flood and over the dead bodies of your enemies; the soul's enemies whom it is

no sin to slay, and whom you must meet in mortal combat at every turning point in life. So much the more reason for keeping a sharp look out, and letting the past take care of itself. There is no time for tears and sighs, for hopeless brooding over old sorrows, for vain remorse over past misdeeds. For each new day let there be new thoughts, new hopes, new achievements. That is the way to make life rich and fruitful and fascinating, to cheat labour of its burden and sorrow of its sting, in short, to be happy.



LXVIII

FAMILY STRIFE.

*And will ye never know, till sleep shall see
Your graves, how dreadful and how dark indeed
Are pride, self-will and blind-voiced anger, greed,
And malice with its subtle cruelty ?*

—A. Lampman.

TO one habitually gentle and kind-hearted, there is no spectacle at once more pitiful and incomprehensible than that of a family in which, though all the elements of happiness are apparently assembled, life is made well-nigh unendurable by the perpetual strife and discord of its members.

Dreadful and dark, indeed, are the consequences of even one ungovernable temper in a household, but when two or three come into collision, well may Dante's famous inscription be written over the portal : "Leave all hope, you who enter here."

From the hour when the family assembles at breakfast, until night brings enforced rest and peace, the history of each day is a melancholy succession of bickerings, angry recriminations, or passionate outbreaks of temper, culminating too often in threats or deeds of violence. It is not easy to explain how things have come to such an unhappy pass, nor how intelligent rational beings can be satisfied to live in such horrid discord. Doubtless, each one, if questioned, would blame the others and hold him or herself guiltless, or

at most, plead that there was provocation sufficient to upset the most angelic temper. The root of the trouble must be traced back to the early years of married life when the parents, criminally oblivious alike of their mutual vows and solemn responsibilities, gave their infant children the first lessons in domestic strife and tyranny.

Battles fought at the breakfast table in the presence of wondering little ones were quickly repeated in the nursery with an attention to details which should have been a sufficient reproach to the indiscreet elders, but which, often as not, were laughed at as instances of smartness and precocity. But the seeds once sown, the evil habits sprouted quickly in the youthful hearts, and by degrees crowded out the good growths of sympathy, gentleness and forbearance. Cheerful conversation, or an affectionate interest in one another's ideas and plans gradually became more and more difficult. Any announcement made by one only elicited sneering or envious retorts from the others, and day by day, hearts that should have been bound together by the closest ties of love and sympathy became more and more estranged, suspicious and reserved. Home is no longer "sweet home," and any excuse to leave it is eagerly welcomed. The parents discover their errors too late, and some day are left mourning alone under the roof-tree which their unruly children had been only too glad to forsake. Repentance, perhaps, follows all, for in a cold world one quickly learns the value of privileges once neglected and despised. The reunited members of the family would no doubt find one another chastened in spirit and shorn of many angularities by contact with unfeeling strangers, but such reunions are seldom permitted in this uncertain life. There is no beginning over again where we once left off. The opportunities of to-day die with it, and to-morrow brings a whole new

set of duties and cares. We can afford to lose no time therefore in setting things right that have gone awry. Even this very day, each one of us may offer a shining example in her own household of that gentleness whose grace

“Smooths out so soon the tangled knots of pain.”

The soft answer, the discreet silence, the tactful direction of conversation into pleasant channels, the little word of sympathy or approbation instead of useless fault-finding, the unexpected service quietly rendered, these are the secrets of a good woman’s influence in her own home, these the simple means by which she may successfully combat the spirit of strife and discord threatening to undermine the happiness of the household. To graduate in such an art as this brings incomparably greater and more real distinction on a girl than the highest honours achieved in class or studio.



LXIX

ARTIFICIAL DEEDS.

Artificial deeds, like artificial flowers, give forth no perfume.

—Selected.

S LAVES of custom as we all are in a greater or less degree, it is difficult for us to avoid now and then falling into conventional ways, saying and doing what others say and do, in defiance of certain secretly cherished convictions of our own, and for no earthly reason save in obedience to a curious sheep-like tendency of human nature to follow its kind. Hence do so many of us lead artificial lives, assuming virtues we have not, pretending to disapprove of certain occupations or pastimes which, in reality, have a fascination for us that we would die rather than acknowledge; cultivating the society of persons considered estimable, but who bore us to death, and keeping aloof from those who are actually the elect of our affections, but who, with the usual contrariness of fate, generally stand somewhere without the daily orbit marked out for us by social or other observances. And so on. We are, to borrow little Miss Mowher's expressive phrase, "a refreshing set of humbugs." And that is why so many of us are dull and uninteresting to one another. Artificial deeds, like artificial flowers, give forth no perfume. Only those that have their roots deep down in the heart, that have been fed by the sunshine of a

happy nature, and refreshed by the dews of sweet, human sympathy, make fragrant the atmosphere in which the doer lives, and cause others to long for her society and presence.

If you would be truly loved and appreciated in this world you have only to be natural, spontaneous, sincere. I happen to know a young married woman who apparently possesses all the attractions and advantages a woman could desire. She is beautiful, healthy, rich, suitably married, and a happy mother. She has a charming home and mixes freely in the best society of the place she lives in. Yet, though she is, in a way, beyond criticism, she seems unable to inspire any of her friends with real affection. I have frequently heard her character discussed by those who know her best, and though it is impossible to say anything unkind about her, the verdict is always, "she is pretty and charming and all that, but not loveable somehow."

The explanation lies in the fact that she is artificial in manner and conduct. She never seems to be stirred by real feeling, you cannot get a glimpse of her soul, if she has any. You can always foretell exactly what she will say and do under given circumstances. The type is not infrequent. We nearly all have met the well-nigh perfect woman whose very perfections produce a feeling of irritation wherever she goes. It is because she wears them on her sleeve, flaunts them in your face, and seems always to invite comparison favourable to herself and unfavourable to every one else.

Goodness that springs from the heart is, on the contrary, modest and humble ; like the hidden violet its presence is only betrayed by its exquisite perfume, and it is all the more loved because it is only found out by accident.

LXX

BENEFICENT ACTIVITY.

It is better to fight for the good than to rail at the ill.
—Tennyson.

HERE are some delightful people in the world—
too few indeed!—but still enough to go around
and give a shining example to us all—who are so
much occupied in doing good and pleasant things from
day to day, that they really have not time to notice the
shortcomings of their neighbours, nor to grumble
because life is disappointing and others are better off
than themselves. According to their wholesome and
light-hearted philosophy, if this world is really a vale
of tears, the most rational thing to do is to go about
armed with a supply of nice, clean, sweet-smelling
handkerchiefs ready for prompt application whenever
a weeping brother or sister is met by the wayside.
How much more happiness is won and bestowed by the
exercise of this sweet fraternal spirit, than by holding
one's self aloof from one's kind in scorn and bitterness,
caring only “to rail at the ill,” and, by a depressing
example, inducing others to sink into the same hopeless
despondency in which one's warped and contracted
nature finds grim satisfaction.

The sovereign remedy for a tendency to pessimism
is, then, a beneficent activity in works of love. Put off
your grumbling until nothing of a kind or pleasant
nature is left to do, and it will be so long before you

have a chance to indulge in it that you will forget the way. Good habits grow on one as well as bad ones, and half the battle of life is won when high thinking and noble living become, through habit, a second nature. The process by which one attains this moral altitude, does not involve, as some imagine, the sacrifice of one's individuality. True goodness is not negative in character and neutral in shade. On the contrary, it is instinct with life, colour, motion and poetry. It is militant in the highest sense, and wears its colours openly, and presents a sturdy front to its enemies. It is bold and picturesque and carries a shining light upon its forehead before which the false glamour of sin and error pales away like a candle in the noon-day sunshine. Cant and maudlin sentiment have nothing to do with it. It dwells in the heart, not on the lips, and hypocrisy is even more hateful to it than vices openly practised. So do not be afraid to be "merely good," and do not conclude that an attitude of criticism towards your fellow-man and life in general indicates mental superiority. Quite the contrary, as the study of the greatest and wisest men's lives will show. "Goodness is greatness wheresoever found."



GRATITUDE.

Let gratitude for the past inspire you with trust for the future.

—Fenelon.

 E grateful and you will be happy. The prescription is simple enough, but somehow the majority of us refuse to swallow it. We prefer to make a wry face, turn away, and go back to our grumblings.

It is a most curious thing how we will deliberately sit down and gloat over our misfortunes, tell their history to every one we can lay hold of, and have recourse to the most ingenious arguments to prove that no other person in the wide world is quite as miserable as we. As for our advantages, we seldom think of them ; or, if we do, we love to belittle them ; nay, we speak of them with absolute scorn, and we never forgive the friend who undertakes to point them out to us in their true light. It is a kind of mania that we have, to undervalue our possessions, our privileges, our opportunities, and to be ever enviously looking away from them in the direction of those of our seemingly more fortunate neighbours. The thing we would yesterday have moved heaven and earth to acquire for our own, drops into our lap unexpectedly to-day, and to-morrow we speak of it airily, nay contemptuously, as something far below the level of our deserts.

This irrational habit, common to the whole human race, might be less aggravating if it were not for the

ludicrous inconsistency with which we fulminate against those who have been ungrateful towards ourselves. Our memory is singularly tenacious of the least favour bestowed on a fellow-creature, and if our unfortunate beneficiaries appear for a moment to forget their indebtedness to us, we throw up our hands in horror and denounce them as monsters of ingratitude.

It is not merely by attending a Thanksgiving Day service once a year that we are going to wipe out all our obligations to an all-bountiful Providence. It is meet, of course, that we should unite on special occasions, and with due solemnity offer formal praise and thanksgiving to the Giver of all good gifts. But it is in the heart, not on the lips, that the searching eye of God looks for gratitude, and it is only in the joyful heart that the virtue is found, the heart which is kept glad every day and all day long by the remembrance of the infinite love and mercy of Him in whom we live and move and have our being. A little fruitful meditation every morning on the various blessings bestowed on us should suffice to induce a deep and sustaining sense of gratitude, as well as to inspire us with an unwavering trust for the future. Thus safeguarded, the demons of envy and jealousy shall have no power over us, and when misfortune comes—as come it must, to one and all—our deep-seated serenity will not be moved. There can be no doubt whatever about it, a grateful spirit must eventually make a happy heart.



HOSPITALITY.

The meal unshared is food unblest..

—Whittier.

THE majority of us are debarred by circumstances from exercising the princely virtue of hospitality in the degree that would please us best. But even the poorest of the poor may, on occasion assume the character of a host to the friend or stranger whom chance may lead to his door. There is a grace in the kindly offer of a shelter and an invitation to break bread with one, which appeals irresistibly to the human heart whether it beats under the royal purple or the tattered garments of the mendicant. Courtesy of speech and manner count for far more in such opportunities than the quality of the viands laid before one. A morsel of bread and a cup of water from the spring offered with a frankly welcoming smile, have a sweeter taste to a guest than the greatest triumphs of cookery evolved in embarrassed haste and served with obvious inconvenience.

The hospitality of the farm house is proverbial. The residents of towns and large cities are very far behind their country cousins in this respect. It seems to be taken almost as a matter of course that the farmer's wife will greet every stranger who halts at her door to ask the way, or the privilege of resting in a shady spot near her dwelling, with a cordial smile and an offer of

refreshment. The glass of rich milk or home-made wine, the dish of berries, or cup of tea is always forthcoming.

In town it is the exceptional housekeeper who welcomes an unexpected guest with a similar display of friendliness. And the idea of offering refreshment to a complete stranger would not be entertained for a moment.

It is a pity that the good old custom of freely offering hospitality to friends, at least, should be suffered so frequently to fall into abeyance. There are homes in which a guest at the table is a positively unknown quantity, and in which it were vain to expect in any emergency as much as the simple offer of a cup of tea.

The inference is, of course, either that the hostess is of an extremely niggardly disposition, or that her household is administered in such a slovenly fashion that she is at all times unprepared to invite possible criticism from strangers.

The simple family dinner which is considered good enough for those who are nearest and dearest on earth to the provider, should surely be good enough for the chance visitor or the stranger within her gates.

It is a false pride which makes any woman shrink from revealing to one outside her family the fact that her larder is not stocked with the best foods in season, or her table furnished with the finest linen and china. Of all foolish pretences surely none is more foolish than that of greater wealth than one actually possesses.

When reluctance to admit a guest to the table is founded on the consciousness of deficiencies in respect of the cleanliness of table appointments or of carelessness in the preparation of food, then indeed is the house-mistress self-convicted of a most serious dereliction from duty.

The fact that a daintily laid table and the prepara-

tion of particularly appetising dishes in the average home always announce the advent of a visitor is rather a sad commentary on the manner in which the ordinary repasts are served. Let them be worthy of the husband and children for whom they are provided and they must then necessarily be fit for any guest, without additional fuss or ceremony. Strange that any woman needs to be reminded of her duty in this respect.

Fewer lapses from it would no doubt occur if the custom of sharing a meal with the chance comer were more general.

If only from this point of view it would be desirable to cultivate such simple hospitality, besides taking the poet's word for it that

"The meal unshared is food unblest."



LXXIII

THE VALUE OF GREAT IDEAS.

Little ideas and big successes never go together.

—Selected.

H EAVEN be praised for it, there is no tax on ideas! We may not all dwell in marble halls, wear purple and fine linen, and live on princely fare, but however “cribb'd, cabin'd and confin'd” we may be by outward circumstances, we have as a glorious inheritance and birthright, the accumulated wisdom of ages on which to draw without stint whenever it pleases us to do so. No power on earth can prevent our minds from soaring to the loftiest heights and keeping company with the choicest spirits. No power except our own will. If we choose to grovel, that is another story. So it is well to bear in mind that “little ideas and big successes never go together,” and that when we barter away our spiritual birthright for an ignoble mess of pottage, we cut ourselves off irrevocably from all chances of future distinction in the honourable walks of life.

There are many cramping influences in a woman's life, which, unless she is watchful and active, tend inevitably to contract her mental horizon, and to concentrate her interest on trivial things.

It is perhaps the custom of those among whom she lives to give anxious thought and eager discussion to matters of the most ephemeral character. How Mrs.

Brown could afford to give her daughter a new silk dress, why Miss Gray did not ask Miss White to her last party, who the stranger could be that sat in Mrs. Green's pew last Sunday, these are questions of absorbing interest that agitate some members of a small community for days at a stretch. If only half as much thought and research could be brought to bear on the genesis of a great poem, the explanation of the sunset colours, or even the best way to dispose of the weekly mending, how effectually would the plane of thought and action of women be raised, how much richer and more interesting to themselves and others would their lives become !

A proper sense of self-respect teaches us to avoid all littleness in thought, speech and action, to look above and beyond the petty interests and prejudices that would hem us in from contact with the world of great ideas ; to learn to discriminate between things transient and permanent, between the illusions of Vanity Fair, and the eternal verities of existence ; to keep in touch with what is high, noble and enduring by reading good books, imitating great examples, living a pure and beautiful life. Only in this way may we hope to attain real and great success.



LXXIV

PERFECTION IN TRIFLES.

Trifles make perfection, but perfection is no trifle.
—Michael Angelo.

WELL did the great builder know, who had himself brought three noble arts to their highest perfection, by what methods man is compelled to work in order to attain the object of a great ambition. Contemplate the monuments of his genius, examine carefully their composition, and even more astonishing than the splendour of his conceptions and the sublimity of his finished master-pieces, is the care, the minuteness, the exquisite attention to detail, which stamped the most seemingly trifling portion of his work with the seal of a mighty genius. He was never blinded by the vision of an ultimate triumph, to the importance of fidelity and exactness in the execution of the separate parts destined to make up the perfect whole. Not the least fragment of his famous frescoes, his colossal statues, his magnificent paintings but, if alone left to testify to his powers, is richly qualified to fulfil that function.

We may not share his genius nor emulate his brilliant achievements, but there is nothing to hinder us from being actuated by the same spirit which ever urged him on to a perfection which his superior insight enabled him to see was made up of trifles. With equal determination and perseverance we can put the best that is

in us, into our lightest word and deed, so that the stamp, if not of a superior nature, at least of an aspiring one, shall be on it, and men shall know by it of what stuff we are made, and whether the purpose of our life is base or noble. We must not be impatient with the littleness of things.

“On earth the broken ares ; in Heaven, the perfect round.”

With this thought in mind, no effort will seem to be wasted. The flower that blushes unseen is as eager to reach its perfect development as the choicest bloom of the hot-house or the parterre. Shall we be less generous towards our Creator because we are too short-sighted to perceive His intention in placing us where we are ?



THE PRIOR CLAIMS OF DUTY.

*Knowledge is a steep that few may climb, but duty
is a path that all may tread.*

 A WOMAN who sincerely loves what is good and right for its own sake, should be richly content to feel that she faithfully fulfils from day to day the duties and requirements of her particular state in life. But vanity, with a very big V, is ever whispering in her ear that she should seek some larger and more public career than the one which ties her to the narrow precincts of the home circle. In her idle moments she loves to dream of other possible spheres of action in which as the central figure of an admiring group of spectators, she would shine by the exercise of talents which, under existing circumstances, she feels are hidden under a bushel. She does not realize that beyond the threshold of her home lies a cold, indifferent world, ready to carp at and criticise, and condemn, and push aside, all who are so unwise as to attempt tasks beyond their strength or talent ; that failure in the eyes of unsympathetic fellow-beings means a terrible isolation, which is all the more bitter for having been wilfully courted.

It is true the prizes of life must be fought for, and many are worthy of keen struggle against the most despairing odds ; but the race is to the swift and the

battle to the strong ; and only such as feel themselves truly equipped for the combat should venture forth on the world's dusty and perilous highway.

For the many the path of duty is a safe and sweet one ; how sweet, alas, one never knows until one has strayed beyond its borders and wept passionate tears over one's deflections.

Sometimes it happens that even fair Knowledge beckoning a humble follower of duty to alluring heights hitherto unscaled, must be passed by, however wistfully. If we have learned our arithmetic to some purpose and realized what an important part it plays in the complex science of living, we know that we must make careful count of our days, our resources, our aims and our duties, seeking by a wise economy of some and a multiplication of others to balance the columns in the ledger of life. When we find a large expenditure of physical force a necessity, sound judgment dictates retrenchment in the mental outlay, and conversely. It is no cause of reproach to a woman, though it may be one of regret, to have missed a possibly brilliant career beyond the lines in which her life was laid, but it is a shame to all who, having the path of duty plain before them, failed to tread it faithfully unto the end.



LXXVI

SYMPATHY IN FAILURE.

*We are not much bound to those that do succeed,
But in a more pathetic sense are bound to such as fail.*
—Selected.

HE realization of failure is of all human trials the most discouraging. Not only is the spirit weighed down with the sense of loss, disappointment or incapacity, but it writhes under the consciousness that its defeat has been witnessed by many who will not fail to use this knowledge for the future humiliation of the victim. Humanity has little sympathy with failure ; even the ties of blood are not always sufficiently strong to safeguard the unsuccessful against the pitiless criticism of wasted efforts. Brothers and sisters will not spare their sarcasms when commenting on one another's unlucky ventures. A husband who has lost money in an unwise investment fears to meet the eye of his wife. It requires a good stock of courage to regain confidence in one's self and face one's difficulties afresh when from the very lips that should be whispering words of comfort and hope there fall only cruel expressions of contempt and derision. The extent of the injury inflicted is probably not appreciated by any but the sufferer. It is frequently the result of thoughtlessness rather than of a deliberate desire to wound, but thoughtlessness that entails such painful consequences becomes a grave fault, which must be zealously guarded against.

It should be easy enough, in the family at least, to refrain from comments or allusions that must annoy and humble any of its members who may have experienced some unlooked-for check or set-back. If the disaster must be discussed, let the discussion be conducted with so much tact and sympathy that the one most deeply affected will feel gratefully conscious of the support that loving hearts can readily tender in such emergencies. Only by such means can despair be changed into hope, defeat into victory.

After all, there is no sufficient reason why the most seemingly hopeless failure should fall with crushing force on any human being. Life is a game of chance at best, and it is, to say the least, unsportsmanlike to lose heart when the defeat, which is always imminent, becomes actual. Some must lose and some must win. The main thing is that there be fair play and magnanimity of spirit on the part alike of victors and vanquished.

A woman is apt to magnify the effect of failure or defeat, which must come to the knowledge of her friends, and excite their pity and contempt. But it is just in such circumstances that true pride and independence should assert themselves. Our manner of meeting adversity has a great deal to do with the impression formed by the world of its seriousness. When we can cheerfully face the inevitable, declining to be snuffed out by the first little breath of adversity that assails us, and forestalling unkind comment by a dignified refusal to treat ourselves as failures, we shall find the world quite ready to take the hint and renew its belief in us.

When we shall have helped ourselves first, we shall find many another willing to help us.

LXXVII

RED-LETTER DAYS.

*No valley life but hath some mountain days,
Bright summits in the retrospective view,
And toil-won passes to glad prospects new,
Fair sunlit memories of joy and praise.*

—F. R. Havergal.

HE value of a beautiful experience is not always understood or appreciated at the time that it takes place. As a memory it often becomes immeasurably dear and precious, though mingled with the emotion that stirs the heart while dwelling on certain past events that made red-letter days in an ordinarily uneventful life, there are apt to be keen regrets awakened by the consciousness that the full beauty and surpassing interest of the occasions in question were, at the time, more or less obscured by some trifling and untoward accident, provoking an ungracious mood that hindered a complete realization and enjoyment of the moment's possibilities.

It is important, therefore, that one should be to a certain extent prepared for the joys that come, alas! so seldom, and that by wise foresight, one should be enabled, in the supreme moments that approach us, freighted with some great happiness, to set aside all minor considerations, and give one's self up wholly to the enjoyment of what may easily rank among the most beautiful and soul-satisfying experiences of one's life.

There are material and shallow natures which are, of course, incapable of profound emotion, or of recognizing the fact that there are sentimental as well as utilitarian values in life, and that a memory enriched with treasured recollections of happy moments is a more precious possession than a pampered body or a bank account which has been increased by the sacrifice of rare opportunities of pure enjoyment.

There are those who will not linger a moment to gaze on the splendour of a summer sunset, because—forsooth—it is so near the dinner hour—the soup might be cold! A walk through the scented woods, or an hour's ramble on the beach has no attraction for the woman who likes to sit on a verandah contemplating her muslin ruffles and daintily shod feet. Such an one, even at the altar, is filled with vain and frivolous thoughts about her appearance and the impression that she is making on others, rather than with the reverent emotions that bespeak a true sense of the sacredness of marriage and all that lies beyond it. For her, indeed, there are no red-letter days but such as recall triumphs of vanity and selfishness. How much greater a measure of enjoyment falls to one who, perceiving the preciousness of an opportunity that comes but once, gives herself gladly and generously up to the happiness of the moment, even if by so doing some sacrifices and inconveniences in other directions are inevitable.

In her eyes, an accident to her gown, a broken tea-cup, or an unkind remark from some unsympathising person is far too trifling a matter to be permitted to mar the beauty of an otherwise perfect day. The whole world weighed in the balance with her happiness is but a feather, which she can lightly toss out of her way. In this spirit we should meet the joys that fall to our portion. Keep them sacredly aloof from all the common-places and petty trivialities of everyday life. Take

them up on our mountain top and extract from them all the pleasure they hold for us. Then, looking back on the dear red-letter days, we shall constantly re-live the happiness that lent them that character. We shall not have to reproach ourselves with having squandered precious opportunities that return no more.



LXXVIII

THE SILENT BEACON.

Lighthouses don't ring bells and fire off cannon to call attention to their shining ; they just shine.

—D. L. Moody.

SINGLENESS of purpose is the high-water mark of nobility of character. Few persons are unwilling to do good if, in the doing, they earn the admiration or applause of those with whom, for one reason or another, they desire to stand well ; or if there is a prospect of gain or increased influence in sight, as a result of their efforts. Thus nothing is easier than to find willing workers in any charitable or philanthropic cause, provided it has for its advocates, men or women of wealth, position and influence. Even these are themselves often actuated by a desire to achieve popularity, or to acquire a certain measure of power by acts of public beneficence. Human vanity is at the bottom of perhaps the greater number of efforts made in the name of charity or the public good.

Only truly noble and generous souls attain the degree of moral altitude in which the performance of great actions solely from a high sense of duty, without regard to the probable effect it will produce on the minds of observers, becomes possible. Such instances of devotion to high principle are rare enough, yet there are probably none among us who cannot point to at least a few notable ones in our very midst—earnest,

faithful workers, who walk straight and steadfastly along the path of duty, neither taking nor desiring credit for the accomplishment of what they regard merely as their personal share in the world's work, not to be shirked on to other shoulders, nor left undone to be a reproach to them through life. They do not ring bells, nor fire off cannon to attract attention to their achievements, but are amply content to shine modestly in their own appointed time and place and way, as unconscious, indeed, as the lamp in the lonely tower, of the strength and brilliancy of the rays they diffuse through the darkness that surrounds them, or of the many in sore stress who are cheered in moments of difficulty by the comforting presence of such a beacon.

Numberless little occasions arise in daily life for exercising charity or dispensing sympathy in quiet ways unknown to any but those immediately benefited. Willingness to profit by these humble opportunities for doing good is the surest indication of Christian sincerity. If you would know just what progress you have made as a good and faithful servant of One Master only, count up what you have done for love of Him alone, unmixed with human motives. Alas ! the total will be so small, it will be rather a source of confusion than of satisfaction to any honest soul. How many women, for instance, regulate their attendance at the church services by the condition of their wardrobes ? How often is the strict observance of Sunday a mere concession to public opinion ; the reading of the Bible an act of ostentation ; total abstinence, purely a matter of economy, or habit ; long devotions, an expedient for passing time easily ? We deceive ourselves readily on many of these points, taking a complacent view of actions which in reality are an offence in the sight of Him who is Truth itself, and who, therefore, abhors hypocrisy and double-dealing.

We can hardly be too severe with ourselves in the examination of the motives that inspire our "good" actions. A too great leniency in this direction will inevitably undermine the strongest foundations of faith and charity.



LXXIX

THE FORCE OF EXAMPLE.

No woman can be so insignificant as to be sure that her example can do no harm.

—Lord Clarendon.

THE influence of the spoken or written word is as nothing beside the force of the living example.

The good books we read, the sermons and admonitions we hear, no doubt affect the mind and character to a certain extent, but it is for the most part with a sense of effort, of unwelcome restraint that we accept the suggestions conveyed to us through these channels. The force of example, on the contrary, carries us along irresistibly, gladly. What we see done by others, we like to do, if only to test our powers and capacity for similar achievement.

Unhappily, an evil example invites imitation no less persuasively than a good one. Each individual is therefore burdened with a great responsibility in this regard. Whatever we say or do while under observation by our fellow-creatures, becomes a factor in determining their moral standpoint. An intelligent mistress learns lessons of honesty and fidelity in the performance of difficult duties by watching a conscientious charwoman or laundress at her day's toil. The humble boot-blacker contributes his quota to the comfort and peace of hundreds of his fellow-creatures by the thoroughness with which he accomplishes his lowly task. Even the

beggar at the rich man's gate may, by the patient acceptance of a stern reply, rebuke the harshness of him who despised his poverty. Wonderful and far-reaching is the power of example that resides in every one of us.

A well-bred young girl once found herself for a time forced to live with a family whose manners were uncouth, and whose ways were slovenly in a degree most repugnant to one of refined tastes and habits. With admirable tact she concealed the disgust she could not help feeling many times a day, and perseveringly exercised the greatest courtesy towards every member of the family, while taking great pains to keep herself and her belongings daintily neat and attractive. In a short time the influence of her presence began to be felt. The men treated her with deference, such as they had never bestowed on their mother and sisters. These, unwilling to seem inferior to her, began almost unconsciously to move or speak with greater gentleness, and to pay more attention to their appearance. Had she permitted herself to criticize or ridicule them, or to dictate to them in personal matters, she would undoubtedly have antagonized them from the first. By feigning not to see or hear what did not meet her approval she first won their affection and respect, and then by example incited them to emulate her good qualities and attainments. She had been a true missionary of peace, order and beauty in a home where these conditions had hitherto been unknown. Even long after her departure the standard she had silently raised by her example remained permanently fixed in the minds of those who had acknowledged its gracious influence in their lives.

We do not always realize where and how far our example is making itself felt. We are often unconsciously instruments of salvation to absolute strangers, and alas! it may be that we have led the way for the first downward step of more than one who too willingly

followed us when we had forsaken the straight path.
This is a thought to give us pause.

We cannot shield ourselves from blame by claiming that what we do or say is of no importance. One of the overwhelming surprises of the Judgment Day will, no doubt, be the revelation of the sum of our influence for good and ill over all who have ever come in contact with us.



LXXX

WITH HAMMER AND CHISEL.

There is no sculpturing like that of character.

—Henry Ward Beecher.

WE often sigh for gifts we do not possess, but seldom care to exercise those we do. It seems a fine thing to be able to convert a shapeless block of marble into a glorious statue. We look with envy on the sculptor as he works at his noble task, and are subdued by a sense of our own incapacity for similar achievement. Yet we are all called to be sculptors, not of unyielding stone, but of that plastic material called character, which responds so readily to the lightest touch and which may be carved by patient and skilful hands into a masterpiece of surpassing nobility.

Is it not curious that we are always ready to manifest impatience and disappointment when children, and young persons in whom we are interested are slow of development, and apparently unappreciative of the educational advantages with which we have been at pains to surround them?

Yet why should we expect results from the thoughtlessness of youth that we with all our experience and wisdom are so slow to produce ourselves? Let us ask ourselves sometimes, what we have learned in the year that has just passed; what we have conquered; what new beauty we have added to our character? Many of us seem to have come to a full stop, as if, having

reached our fullest physical stature, the spiritual part of us likewise refused to grow any more.

But indeed, it is only after the body has attained its perfect development that the soul is free to aspire to the loftiest heights. It is when the hot blood of youth has cooled somewhat, and the illusions that beckoned to us in the spring-time of life have melted away in the clear atmosphere of maturity that we begin to see mental and moral vistas hitherto undreamed of. The lives of many great men furnish us with convincing proofs that intellectual activity may be prolonged far beyond that of the body.

It is only mediocrity that remains satisfied with itself on attaining manhood or womanhood, recognizing no necessity for further efforts at improvement. But mediocrity is terribly widespread, and we must be on our guard lest we, too, fall into its ranks. We have but to keep an eye—the eye of the sculptor—on our character, and chisel in hand, be always ready to chip off here or there, the useless material that hides the imprisoned beauty.

It is an engrossing as well as an ennobling task. The process is necessarily slow, but the result is sure. And though the work will never seem quite complete it will be fair enough, perhaps, some day, to earn for the worker that praise, than which none can be sweeter or more precious to human ears, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”



IN HARVEST TIME.



LXXXI

IN HARVEST TIME.

*O favours every year made new!
O gifts with rain and sunshine sent!
The bounty overruns our due,
The fulness shames our discontent.*

—Whittier.

THE changes of the seasons emphasize for us in a striking manner, the value of many earthly blessings, which we would but lightly appreciate were they continued uninterruptedly during the whole course of the year. In these "melancholy days" the sight of the leafless trees and gardens blighted with frost, recalls the sweet summer joys which have passed beyond our reach forever, and we wonder how we could ever have felt discouraged or discontented while skies shone so fair above us, and a smiling earth was under our feet.

Yet even while our thoughts linger regretfully on the departed glories of summer, we must not fail to recognize the bounty, the "mellow fruitfulness," the promises of good cheer and happy fellowship that make autumn in one sense, the richest season of the year.

We should not need to be reminded that Thanksgiving Day is near, nor wait for the sermon in church to learn the reasons we have for thankfulness. They are written large all around and about us. We should know them "by heart," as the school children say.

But we are curiously reluctant to dwell on the brighter side of our lives. Of our troubles, our needs, our grievances, we could prate forever and a day, could we find a willing listener. The theme appears to be inexhaustible. But, when reminded of our compensations, how grudgingly we admit their existence! How readily we accuse those who enumerate them for us, of a lack of sympathy for our misfortunes. And we are always firmly convinced that our trials are of a peculiar severity which the unfeeling world shall never understand.

One, who is tortured with pain, cries, "Give me health, only health, and I shall be happy." Are the healthy then so fortunate, so passionately to be envied? If so, why do they ceaselessly grumble because other things are denied them?

One who lives in luxury, yet leads a loveless life, yearns, in the loneliness of her heart, for a crust in the wilderness shared with one who would be kind. And another, who is tenderly loved and cared for, is filled with envy and discontent, because she cannot fare daintily, wear purple and fine linen, and live a life of ease and pleasure.

If we would keep the spirit of the Thanksgiving festival in our hearts, not only for a day, but throughout our lives, we have but to keep in mind the full value of the blessings we are permitted to enjoy, and which are denied to so many more worthy than we. It will then be easy to accept with courage and dignity our share of the trials of humanity. It ill becomes us to question whether that share is a just one or not. The very thought is blasphemous, when we know there is One who fits the back to the burden and tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. How shall we excuse ourselves then, for repining under every cloud of misfortune that temporarily excludes the sunshine from our

lives! We are not children that we should whimper over every trifling cut and bruise, and thwarted wish ; we are, or should be, " valiant women," eager to prove ourselves worthy of the love and trust of Him we serve.

The lines quoted above, constitute a little sermon, which we might well commit to memory and recall whenever we are tempted to forget the many reasons we have to give thanks to God.



LXXXII

THE WRONG WAY.

We often do right things in the wrong way.

—Selected.

“*G*OOD” people are not always loveable. Many of them, to tell the truth, are quite the reverse. They have a faculty of making those who live with them thoroughly uncomfortable. Consciously or not, they develop a sanctimonious, or censorious manner, which creates a feeling of restraint wherever they appear. To live up to their standard seems a hopelessly difficult undertaking. They fairly bristle with virtues, chiefly of the self-denying order, to emulate which the average human sinner feels compelled to forego all the ordinary comforts and pleasures of life. These are the people who do right things the wrong way. The end they propose to themselves is a good one. The fault lies in the means they take to reach it. But they are not clever enough to discover their own limitations. A defective sense of humour prevents them from suspecting the excess and futility of their zeal in many directions. Entirely satisfied that their own little theory of life and the narrow ideal they have proposed to themselves are before and above those of all the rest of humanity, they are absolutely impervious to new impressions, broader views, or any salutary influence that might disturb their complacent belief in their own infallibility.

Then there are the impulsive people, who, in a moment of reflection or sudden illumination, think they have discovered some wonderful panacea for sorrow or suffering, some talisman for exorcising sinful tendencies from the human heart, some secret of happiness which they are in haste to proclaim from the house-tops for the benefit of humanity at large. Their mistakes are many and grievous. They suffer some cruel disillusionments and discouragements. Where they looked for gratitude and praise, they meet censure and ridicule, or, at best, indifference. When their good intentions thus miscarry, it is the world they blame, not themselves. The conviction that they have done the right thing sustains them through countless failures. It never occurs to them that they may have done it in the wrong way.

To go about doing good is unquestionably the ideal Christian life. But it is surely the highest presumption to assume that one's own way of doing it is always the right way. One should be on the watch for indications of one's mistakes, and alert to improve one's methods accordingly. If you begin by offending, irritating or boring people, you will never succeed in enlisting their sympathies in any cause. "We learn only from those we love," says Goethe. If you would lead or teach others, first win their hearts. If you cannot do that, stand aside and let one more worthy attempt the task while you address yourself to the more urgent necessity of reforming yourself. It only brings discredit on religion and right living in the eyes of weaker brethren, to have these represented by incapable and unloveable persons.

LXXXIII

MISTAKES OF ALTRUISM.

We are all islands shouting lies to one another across seas of misunderstanding.

—Rudyard Kipling.

THREE is infinite pathos—as well as infinite humour—in the fact that however close the contact, however near the relationship which binds human beings together, no single one of us ever did or ever can truly know the other. Consciously or not, we cloak our real selves in a disguise which is more or less impenetrable. We have our reserves, our private opinions of things and people; our secret longings and ambitions; our unacknowledged sympathies and antipathies; also, that wonderful adaptability to circumstances, which, perhaps, oftener than any other cause, makes us assume the virtues that we have not. In daily life, our actions constantly belie our wishes, our feelings, yet it is by the first we are judged in a world which takes no account of what it does not see. We ourselves, though so well taught by personal experience that deeds often do violence to the desires of the performer, are nevertheless ready to form our opinions of others from our observation of their actions, or inaction, under given circumstances.

To quote a familiar instance, a husband believes his wife to be a quiet, sensible little woman, because she commits none of the extravagances he is fond of

denouncing on the part of his neighbour's wife. All the time, the partner of his bosom, fearing to disturb her lord's illusions concerning her, goes on stifling her harmless longings for this or that bit of finery, or for some innocent pleasure on which her woman's heart is set. The two will deceive one another to the very end. It is the same with sisters, friends, lovers, even with parent and child. All are "shouting lies to one another across seas of misunderstanding."

Once you have grasped the full significance of this portentous fact, so profoundly interesting, mysterious, elusive and disturbing, your curiosity concerning your fellow-creatures takes a keener edge ; you become reluctant to judge them by appearances only ; you see opening up before you a wide field of speculation as to the hidden virtues and weaknesses of those you love, and live with : as to the nature and extent of your own restraining influence on their true characters ; as to your responsibilities towards all who are thus affected by your propinquity to them.

You have heard the story of the two maiden sisters who lived together many years in love and harmony. One liked crust and the other liked crumb. It would have been easy enough to divide up the loaf so as to satisfy both, had they been sensible beings, but the one who liked crust, assuming that her sister also preferred that portion, habitually, in a spirit of self-abnegation, chose the crumb. The other, who was equally self-sacrificing, swallowed the crust (which she hated and her sister coveted), with a heroic pretence of enjoyment. At last one sister died, and the other, no longer under the necessity of denying herself, no doubt found much consolation in helping herself freely to her favourite portion of the loaf. But some one who was in the confidence of the deceased, concerning her real preference, could not refrain from telling the truth

to the survivor, whose feelings on learning the futility of her self-denial of years, may be better imagined than described.

And this is how we are all playing at cross purposes and deceiving one another our whole lives long.

If only each of us dared to be absolutely true to ourselves for a single day, the world would be revolutionized. Such a sweeping consummation is perhaps, not to be wished, yet there is no doubt that we habitually defer too much to public and private opinion, and that a more frank and fearless policy on the part of every individual, would ultimately result in a sturdier morality, and afford a more solid and enduring basis for the real content and happiness of all.



LXXXIV

JUST CRITICISM.

Why art thou afflicted at a little matter said against thee ?

—Thomas-a-Kempis.

MOST of us have a certain amount of modesty, or seem to have it, because whenever we are praised, we think it behooves us to deprecate the compliment, emphasising more or less our unworthiness of it. Even those among us whose self-esteem is the greatest, will scarcely lay claim to perfection, moral or physical, but will readily admit, in a general way, at least, the existence of certain personal defects and limitations. Yet, if we are quite sincere when we say we know we have faults, how comes it that we cannot bear to have those faults so much as mentioned by others ? If it is a positive fact that my temper is bad, my tongue unguarded, my disposition selfish, my manners haughty, my conversation dull, or my household affairs badly administered, why should I wax furious because some candid friend or neighbour makes a simple statement to that effect. Have I never, myself, committed a similar offence in regard to some other person ? Do I so habitually refrain from commenting, in conversation, on the character, conduct or other private affairs of my neighbour ? Unless I do, how can I explain the resentment I feel towards those who serve me in like manner ? By what right may I claim

the freedom to discuss whom and what I will, while sternly forbidding others to make me or mine a subject of conversation?

A very little reflection suffices to show one the egregious folly and unreasonableness of the anger that surges in our breast whenever an uncomplimentary remark made about us out of our hearing is repeated to us by some officious friend. How much more consistent and sensible it would be to say calmly : "Indeed, it is quite true, I regret to say," and then dismiss the matter from our thoughts, or retain it merely as a wholesome reminder of a fault that must be promptly cured.

Instead of indulging in bitter and revengeful feeling against one who has discovered our weakness, we should, if we sincerely desire to improve ourselves, feel indebted to the frankness which opens our eyes to failings we had not perhaps perceived, and certainly did not imagine were perceived by others. It is naturally depressing and humiliating to be confronted with an image of ourselves totally different from the one we fondly believed we were presenting to the world ; but surely, it is better to be undeceived and given a chance to improve, than to be allowed to go on to the end, hugging a delusion which only makes us ridiculous in the eyes of all. Undoubtedly, if it were not for the disagreeable truths that sometimes come to our ears, we should all be victims of a colossal conceit, foolishly imagining that everybody was delighted with us, and seeing no necessity to restrain any of our caprices, or to acquire any new virtues.

The best of us are only "children of a larger growth," apt to run wild unless subjected to corrective influences, more or less drastic. We no longer submit to the rod, but we cannot hope to escape the rebuffs that lie in wait for all who make themselves in any way

obnoxious to others. It is the part of wisdom to accept them with a good grace, endeavouring to turn them to our own profit, which is the only way to secure immunity in the future, against a repetition of such unpleasant experiences.



LXXXV

UNJUST CRITICISM.

In our relations with others we forgive them more readily for what they do which they can help than for what they are, which they cannot help.

—Selected.

WHETHER we are conscious of it or not, it is a fact that in our social relations, our attitude to one another is habitually critical and we are apt to arrogate to ourselves the function of an umpire, from whose decisions dissent is regarded as an affront. Viewed from without, the situation is full of humourous aspects, but the victims of it are not likely to see so clearly where the fun comes in.

Bravely to bear the brunt of constant daily criticism of one's every word and action, especially when the criticism is for the most part unkind, supposes an endowment of patience, pluck, and lofty indifference to trifles, which not one man or woman in twenty can truly claim to possess.

The disposition to retaliate grows on weaker natures with fearful rapidity and the result is that we are mostly a discontented, carping, cavilling lot, finding little good in any one but ourselves.

Even if we confined our strictures to peoples' actions which they can help, we might be justified by an apparent desire to keep up a high standard of conduct, but when we ungenerously extend our criticism to the

natural limitations, inherited characteristics, or congenital defects of our neighbour, which he can no more help than the grass can help being green, our motives are indeed indefensible, and our conduct blameworthy in the last degree.

If we could but bring to the study of human nature the perfect impartiality with which we observe the habits of the lower orders of creation, the mental process would yield us a much more intense enjoyment, and no one would suffer from the scrutiny, however curious and constant. As things are, many of us endure untold sufferings from a consciousness of the incessant and unfriendly espionage exercised over us by those among whom we live.

That fine and beautiful intuition which suggests unerringly to the kind-hearted and well-bred just how far they may go without touching the sensitive places in the exposed surfaces of other people's lives, is an attribute as rare as it is endearing. To learn to mind our own business, and let our neighbour's severely alone, is too hard a lesson for the majority of us. We like to umpire every game that is going on, to point out the flaws in every system, to sit in judgment on every luckless fellow-creature.

A little reflection on our own shortcomings should prove an effective antidote to this poison of unwarrantable meddlesomeness working in our system. Who are we that we should set ourselves up as models? Is our own life such a shining success that we are qualified to put on superior airs towards others? Are we not all conscious of many miserable failures which the world knows nothing about, and which, if known, would cause us, perhaps, to hang our heads with shame at our own incompetency to the end of our lives? There is reason enough, Heaven knows, for us all to be patient and forbearing with one another, to overlook faults, misfor-

tunes, incapacity, or whatever other limitation differentiates mere men from angels. Would we but practise the golden rule faithfully, instead of breaking it a hundred times a day, as we now habitually do, all the cares and vexations that presently afflict our spirits would

“fold their tents like the Arabs,
And silently steal away.”



LXXXVI

THE RIGHT KIND OF RIVALRY.

The situation that has not its duty, its id. i., was never yet occupied by man.

—Thomas Carlyle.

AN interesting and profitable subject of mental speculation is furnished by an attempt to realize what some of the greatest women who have ever lived would have made out of the ordinary life of the average wife or mother in moderate circumstances. The imitative instinct is so strong in many of our sex, that merely by an effort of the will, we can readily and with fair success, impersonate any well-known character. Suppose, for instance, you have been reading the poems or letters of Mrs. Browning, and your mind is more or less saturated with the qualities of hers : you will find it quite easy to speak and act, to a certain extent in her manner, sinking your own individuality in hers, and almost unconsciously being lifted above such motives as you instinctively know would have been rejected by her as trivial or unworthy. Similarly, one can become impregnated with George Eliot's broad philosophy, and keen sense of humour, to the extent of seeing things as it were, through the great novelist's eyes, and recognizing by the help of the superior insight thus borrowed from genius, the insignificance of the aims, interests, vexations, and triumphs, in which one's normal life is bound up. It is easy

enough to match one's own temperament among those of the greatest women. Charlotte Bronte, Mrs. Stowe, Florence Nightingale, Frances Willard, and others even greater who preceded them, have shown, the way to reach as many ideals, and in ways equally diverse. Better than all is she who was "blessed among women," and in whom were combined in their highest perfection, every sweetest and most desirable attribute of maid, wife, and mother. No one need feel the lack of a suitable prototype who has not given some thought to the Virgin Mother, whom Tennyson has so beautifully described as

"Our tainted nature's solitary boast."

A woman who has a marked individuality, with great force of character, may feel a reluctance to accept any other as a model, but the average woman cannot fail to appreciate the moral stimulus furnished by the contemplation of a loftier nature than her own. It keeps alive in her heart the wish and determination to attain the same high levels of thought and achievements as those in which the elect of her sex habitually dwelt—and brings her into honourable emulation with them. How much nobler to engage in a contest of this nature than in a pitiful rivalry with one's neighbours in the matter of vulgar display or passing popularity! Mere material or worldly satisfactions are necessarily of a superficial and ephemeral nature, whereas, a gain in mental or moral power is a permanent and fruitful source of happiness and distinction.

LXXXVII

TRAINING FOR A GREAT CAREER.

*In life's small things be resolute and great
To keep thy muscle trained ; knowest thou when Fate
Thy measure takes, or when she'll say to thee,
“I find thee worthy ; do this deed for me !”*

—Lowell.

THIERE was a king of England who had the unlucky fault of being a laggard in those public duties which it behooved him to perform with care and punctuality, and therefore his name has come down to posterity with the epithet : “The Unready” attached to it. It is fortunate for many of us that the “fierce light which beats upon a throne” does not shine on our lowly lives, for if it did, there would surely be a great army of “unreadys” recruited from the ranks of women throughout the world.

To take too much thought for the morrow is a fault, but to take none at all is a greater. The unready woman never looks beyond to-day—indeed she does not know from hour to hour what wind of fancy may blow her foolish thoughts this way or that. She is like the weather-vane, which every passing breeze turns with it. She makes no plans, contemplates no future contingencies, never troubles herself about her fitness or unfitness for duties that may be laid upon her. She is often good-natured and willing enough to do what she can for others, when called upon to assist, but it is in a slip-

shod, get-it-over-and-be-done-with-it manner which gives little joy to herself or others.

There can be no harmony, no dignity, nor useful purpose in such a life. A wise woman uses reflection and judgment even in the least important affairs, for the smallest act often has wide-reaching consequences. By being "resolute and great" in small things, keeping her muscle trained she is ever ready for the highest decrees of fate, and there is little fear that a call will not come, soon or late, bidding her do some noble deed for which she has been found worthy.



LXXXVIII

ART, THE EDUCATOR.

Education, if it means anything, is the quickening of the powers that enable us to live—ideally and practically, morally and mentally—or that give us the capacity to enjoy and expand this life; and art, even in its simplest form, tends to these ends.

—John P. Weir.

PROBABLY no two minds would agree as to what constitutes a good education; and it is no doubt for the good of mankind that great diversity in existing educational methods is encouraged by the divided support given to all. The virtue of each separate theory may thus easily be put to a practical test. One of the weakest points in those most commonly adopted is the exclusion of art studies from the curriculum of the lower scholastic grades. The earth and the whole visible universe afford so many object lessons in beauty that it seems hardly less than criminal to allow children to grow up in ignorance of the science of beauty, which is art.

Unfortunately, a great proportion of the teachers in our public schools are incompetent to instruct their pupils in even the first principles of art, being themselves woefully ignorant in this respect.

Even sheer ignorance is not so reprehensible as the utterly false conception of art entertained by the majority of persons who have never made it a subject of study. It is pitiful, as well as ludicrous, to see the complacency with which some persons, otherwise fairly educated, exhibit for the admiration of their friends a

staring chromio, or ghastly crayon portrait, a "Storm at Sea," done in oils by the daughter of the house, who has never seen the ocean, but who is "so clever" that she can reproduce the most difficult subject from a Christmas card, or a handkerchief box! The same type of young woman is responsible for the impossible "hand-painted" satin panels, that disgrace the parlour walls, the "decorated" drain-pipe in the hall doing duty as an umbrella stand, the sofa pillows fearfully and wonderfully daubed with "scenes," or floral designs. These and similar horrors only too common in the average home, proclaim to all comers in what depths of Cimmerian darkness, as far as knowledge of art is concerned, the perpetrators, their aiders and abettors, are plunged.

Some will say, "If we like these things, why should we not have them? Why not, indeed, just as the Indians have their war-paint and feathers and glass beads. No doubt one would find it difficult to prove to the savage intelligence that these are not things of beauty. Similarly, there are degrees of barbarism in taste, even among civilized nations; there are persons who live and die happily enough in the most benighted condition. But those who are in the light cannot help feeling a benevolent wish to extend their privilege to others less fortunate. Every true lover of art is a born missionary.

It is regrettable that parents and teachers display so much indifference in a matter which is really of prime importance. By a slight effort, they might open up to the children under their care, the endless avenues of purest pleasure which can be reached through a knowledge of the elements of art. They should at least correct every tendency to admire vulgar effects, and endeavour to train the tastes of the little ones by educating their eyes to the close observation of beauty in every

form. No attempt at pictorial reproduction should be praised or exhibited to strangers, unless it displays a marked fidelity to the real object; copies, even of the best models, should be regarded merely as useful exercises or studies, having in no sense the value of an original piece of work.

Only one in a thousand children, perhaps fewer, will show a marked talent for drawing, and mediocrity of performance is by no means to be encouraged, but every child may profitably study art with a view not of producing, but of learning to recognize, appreciate, and enjoy good work.

Good taste, which comes with a knowledge of art, is a universal passport to the society of the most enlightened and charming people the world over: by rendering selection easy, it surrounds us in our homes with those evidences of culture which are a source of the highest pleasure to others as well as to ourselves. A stranger who enters your house for the first time may leave it without a suspicion of your ignorance of geography, music, or mathematics, but a glance at your surroundings enables him to determine whether you are a person of taste and cultivation. To those who by training and association have become fastidious in such matters, nothing can quite compensate for an ugly or vulgar environment. There are blunders in furniture and interior decoration that afflict the educated eye quite as painfully as a flagrant violation of the rules of grammar afflict the ear of a scholar, or as an unpleasant odour affects the sensitive olfactory nerve. All three are equally serious interruptions to agreeable intercourse and should be guarded against with equal care. The cultivation of a fine taste is an object worthy of the most serious effort: to attain it, no surer method can be followed than a conscientious study of the principles of art.

LXXXIX

WEARINESS.

*It must oft fall out
That one whose labour perfects any work
Shall rise from it with eye so worn that he,
Of all men, least can measure the extent
Of what he has accomplished.*

—Robert Browning.

THE truth of the poet's words will come vividly home to every woman who knows the meaning of work. In the freshness of the morning, when the sun is shining and the pride of strength and skill is strong within us ; when we are warmed with love, and cheered by the vision of success, how hopefully, how fearlessly we undertake our daily stint of toil and trouble, how alert are brain and hand to meet the exigencies of the hour, however numerous or perplexing ! In the evening, we say, we shall rest, looking back with triumph on the difficulties vanquished, on the fine results we shall have achieved ; a blessed idleness, richly earned, shall be our portion until the dawning of another day.

Alas ! long before the setting of the sun, our strength and spirits begin to flag, we grow listless, and lose heart for the tasks we engaged to accomplish. We labour on, perhaps, but no longer with love, or pride. The elation of the volunteer has subsided, and our progress is that of the treadmill. When the wheel stops we

stop, but mechanically ; too tired to know or care how much we have achieved. Hardly do we feel any joy in our release. Others may pause to admire the result of our labours, to marvel at our workmanship, to praise our faithfulness. All we ask is to be allowed to shut our eyes and ears on all sights and sounds, to be alone, undisturbed ; to give our worn nerves and spirits a chance to renew themselves ; to forget that there are such things as hearts, souls, aims, motives, responsibilities, or anything but poor tired bodies that ache all over, limbs that weigh like lead, and brains that are addled from dwelling too many hours at a stretch on the sordid and perplexing aspects of life.

"Pity indeed, 'tis pity," but this is the true story of more than half the women who inhabit this work-a-day world.

Is it worth while? This is a question which, from all time, the earnest, great-souled worker has refused to consider. The work of the world has always been, as it always will be done by the men and women who are the salt of the earth, that the cumberers thereof may sit in idleness and enjoy what they themselves are either unwilling to attempt, or powerless to accomplish.

How the courage of the workers is sustained, why they are not deterred from giving the best that is in them for the good of a thankless generation, is their own secret, which none but they and their kind can ever hope to fathom.

But who can doubt that even though it impels them to a laborious life, unsweetened by the reward that might justly be claimed as their due, it lifts them far above the plane of the cumberers, the incapables, and all of that ilk who spend their lives in inglorious ease, enjoying the fruits of other men's labours!

SELF-LOVE.

Self-love is not so vile a thing as self-neglect.

—Shakespeare.

NEGLECT is one of the first symptoms of decay. It has naturally a depressing effect on the beholder. A neglected garden or house is always a sad spectacle. What then shall be said of a neglected human being? In the case of a child, the sight inspires pity for the sufferer, and indignation against those who are responsible for its well-being. But when neglect becomes self-neglect, as in the case of men and women fallen from their high estate of beings made in the likeness of the Deity to one more nearly resembling that of the lower animals, the only meed they receive is contempt, sometimes aggravated into extreme repulsion.

Self-neglect is therefore not only a crime against the individual, but also a serious offence against society, which justly condemns and ostracises those who are found guilty of the indictment. In an enlightened age like ours there is no excuse for an intelligent adult who fails to bring both mind and body up to those standards of cultivation to which the majority of educated people conform. A man or woman is a sorry failure indeed, who, with health and strength to draw upon, lacks the energy and self-respect to keep him or herself in good condition, in every sense of the word.

The danger of self-neglect increases with age, and we have fallen into a reprehensible habit of condoning this tendency on the part of those who are advancing in years. As a matter of fact, it is hardly more difficult, as one grows old, to acquire good, than bad habits. With a reasonable amount of effort—and without some effort no one need hope to master the art of living—it is perfectly possible to preserve even into maturity, nearly all the physical and mental attributes that made one attractive in youth. I once knew a charming old gentleman who reached the ripe age of ninety without allowing himself to become in any sense disqualified to enjoy and adorn the society of the most cultivated and progressive of his contemporaries. To the last he preserved a wonderfully erect figure, a complexion as clear as a girl's, and a crop of wavy, silky hair that attested by its beautiful condition to a regular and vigorous brushing. This youthful octogenarian wore clothes of the most approved cut, and was evidently not of the opinion that his age justified his tailor in exhibiting carelessness as to their fit. He was always scrupulously clean-shaven, his linen was immaculate, he was, in fact, a model of neatness and extreme propriety in all the details of his appearance, so that it was a pleasure merely to look at him. But apart from these outward recommendations to favour, he was quite a delightful companion, being well abreast of the times, and holding opinions worth hearing on all topics of general interest, such as politics, art, music, literature and society. No one, I believe, ever kept old age so successfully at bay as he : to the last, he was as popular among the younger members of society as among those who approached him in years, and when finally, his well-spent life came to a close, he was universally and sincerely mourned as one whose like would not be seen again in a generation.

To take care of one's health, appearance and faculties, with a view of reaching a beautiful and honourable old age, is an entirely praiseworthy object, and one which should never be made the subject of ridicule or reproach. It is, of course, possible to overdo the thing, and become tiresome and fussy about one's self, but without exceeding the bounds of good taste or infringing the rights of others, it is easy enough, in a quiet way, to bestow a reasonable amount of care on one's self.



A FIRM FOOTHOLD.

*If thou hast yesterday thy duty done,
And thereby cleared firm footing for to-day,
Whatever clouds make dark to-morrow's sun,
Thou shalt not miss thy solitary way.*

—Goethe.

TO be weighed down with vague apprehensions regarding an uncertain future, to the extent perhaps, of becoming unfitted for the duties of the present, is to do one's self a grave injury. It is beyond the power of the sagest mortals to prophesy accurately concerning the events of to-morrow. What is to befall us, for good or ill, is an impenetrable secret of fate. Experience has taught us that many and curious surprises lurk behind the veil of the future. A sudden turn of the wheel of fortune sets beggars on horseback, and reduces the princely capitalist to penury. On the most trifling occurrences often hinge the weightiest consequences. The expected disaster, which threatened to ruin us, is averted by the merest accident; the disappointment against which we so bitterly rebelled proves a step towards an inestimable blessing. This is the history which repeats itself in every life, over and over again—and yet, in doubt and abject fear of the "clouds that make dark to-morrow's sun," how many leave the cup of to-day's happiness untasted, taking no account of the precious, living present, which, of

all good gifts of God to man, is the most beautiful and valuable.

Even if the worst must come to pass, is there not all the more urgent reason to fill the intervening time with all the gladness that can be crowded into it? At least then when the dark cloud lowers, there will be sweet memories to beguile the spirit and fortify it against the sombre influence of untoward circumstances. But be these ever so unfavourable, they will not avail to crush the spirit of one who has "cleared firm footing for to-day" by the faithful performance of duty yesterday. She may have to travel far and painfully along a weary road, but she "shall not miss her solitary way."



'TWIXT DAWN AND DARK.

*Let me to-night look back across the span
'Twixt dawn and dark and to my conscience say—
Because of some good act to beast or man,
"The world is better that I lived to-day."*

—Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

HUMAN happiness is made up largely of trifles. Some, of such apparent insignificance, that they are not easily described in words. But one general term may be made to cover them all. It is—sympathy. Give every other good thing to a human being and take this away—he must and will be profoundly unhappy. Take everything else away, and give him this in large degree, and kings will envy him.

Few of us are rich in gold and silver, but if we are not rich in sympathy it is because we do not choose to be so. Sympathy is of two kinds, the romantic and the practical. The first is what we all feel, or think we feel, for those who are beyond our reach—the wounded in battle, the famine-stricken, the widow and the orphan (in the abstract), the struggling artist, musician or writer. The second is what we owe to those who directly surround us, whose claims upon us are strongest, whose need is greatest. For the first, we have no merit whatever. It is a simple emotion, not a virtue. It has no fruits, except perhaps to inflate us with self-esteem. Practical sympathy, on the other hand, is the

greatest of all virtues. It is true charity. It enables us to enter into the hearts of our nearest and dearest, of those who serve us, or in any capacity come in contact with us every day ; it reveals to us their sorrows, their deprivations, their hopes and needs, and prompts us in the right time and place to bestow on them the cheering word, or smile of encouragement, to champion their cause, when others are hostile to it, to praise their efforts when no one else observes them. This is what helps and heartens a fellow-creature more than all the gifts you might bestow upon him. You have not far to look for an object for sympathy of this kind. Under your own roof you will probably find one. Lately, a sweet young girl confided to me the secret of her unhappiness. She has a luxurious home, and no doubt is an object of envy to many of her friends. But she is oppressed with loneliness. Her father is immersed in the cares of a great business. Her mother and elder sisters are "advanced women." They belong to about fourteen clubs," the poor child said to me pathetically, "and they are always so busy writing lectures that they have no time to make visits with me, or to let me entertain my friends, and I am not allowed to go out alone." So the younger daughter is left to her own devices during many long days and evenings, craving for companionship, for sympathy, while her elders occupy themselves with the welfare of humanity at large—they are philanthropists !

If we want to make the world better, let us at least begin to work in the world at our elbow. If we would do this, there would be no further need of missionaries and philanthropists.

XCIII

GROWING IN WISDOM.

The majority of us do not grow wise with years : we merely grow old. —Selected.

THE popular impression that youth is the time to learn, and that when school days are over the education of a young man or woman is “finished,” is responsible, no doubt, in great part, for the appalling state of ignorance in which the majority of human beings are content to go through life. Before marriage the natural ambition to please and to attract attention urges many young persons to correct faults of manner or natural deficiencies, to cultivate their minds and acquire, at least superficially, certain useful and entertaining accomplishments. But after marriage, how many men or women trouble themselves seriously about the important question of their own education? We see the majority relapsing into a state of complete indifference, apparently assuming that they have nothing more to learn; one by one they relinquish their early ambitions, neglect such accomplishments as they had been at great pains to acquire, and by gradual steps they actually fall behind the times to such an extent that they become utterly incapable of expressing an intelligent opinion upon any topic of general interest, whatever, or even upon those touching on the welfare of the home and the responsibilities

of parents. Later, when their children grow up and go to school, the fathers and mothers who have failed to keep their eyes and ears open to what was going on in the world are likely often to be put to shame by their inability to answer the eager questionings of their youthful offspring, who, in time, are forced to consider themselves as superiors in intelligence to their elders—a conclusion which rapidly undermines the respect, and even the affection, in which, up to that time, their parents were held.

So many and so easily accessible to all are the present facilities for acquiring knowledge and for keeping well abreast of the progress of the world, that no one, however poor, may be held excused from this imperative duty. The modern newspaper is the poor man's university. The diligent and faithful perusal of even one good publication is a liberal education for the intelligent human being deprived of other sources of information. Then there is the actual world that surrounds us, the beauties of nature, the wonderful inventions of science, contact with our fellow-creatures, our daily observations and experiences, from all of which we may learn and accumulate wisdom, if we but keep our minds in a proper state of receptivity.

A parent is dissatisfied with a child, who, in a year's time, makes no visible progress in any direction. But what of the parent? Has he, or she, improved or developed to a noticeable degree in the same period of time? Why should the grown man or woman, in full possession of his or her faculties, be allowed to remain stationary, or perhaps to take a step backward, when the child, but half-formed and always more eager for pleasure than work, is expected to stride rapidly forward? Does the mere fact of adolescence excuse ignorance, stupidity or indolence? Does it not rather increase the obligation of the individual towards himself and towards

society to improve, to adorn the sphere in which he moves, to offer an example and stimulus to his juniors.

No one is too old to learn. There has never been a man or woman so wise or learned that it could be said : His or her education is finished. We must all begin to learn something every day. It rests with ourselves to determine with what degree of earnestness we shall apply ourselves to our studies. The labour involved will be much lightened for us if we keep in mind the idea that we do not want merely to grow old with years, but rather to grow wise, thereby laying up stores of knowledge and happiness such as are unknown to those who travel in apathy and indolence to the senility of an unhonoured old age.



XCIV

CONVICTION OR CUSTOM?

It makes all the difference whether we pursue a certain course, because we judge it right ; or judge it to be right because we pursue it.

—Archbishop Whately.

For a single day, every individual person in the world would live strictly up to his or her ideas of right and justice, society would be revolutionized.

The most upright and fair-minded among us are governed to a certain extent by influences which are entirely independent of our convictions, and even sometimes antagonistic to them. We obey custom, we yield to prejudices of race and creed and class. We humour those we love, and fear, or whose favour and esteem we are anxious to secure.

The man or woman who walks straightly and securely in the path of righteousness, unmoved by any consideration of gain or policy is indeed difficult to find.

Since this charge can be refuted by none, it is not easy to defend the very common practice of trying to impose on others opinions and standards which have a purely selfish origin. The rule of life that appears to me satisfactory cannot possibly be adjusted exactly to the needs and aspirations of my neighbour. My conscience, trained along certain lines with which he is utterly unfamiliar, advises or permits me to follow a course

which, to him, appears to make for error and injustice. The extreme divergence of men's views on all subjects establishes unquestionably the liability of human judgment to err, and the difficulty of arriving at absolute standards to which rigid conformity might be expected.

We should, therefore, readily recognize the necessity of exercising tolerance towards those whose views do not coincide with our own, especially when we have not been able to determine "whether we pursue a certain course because we judge it right, or judge it to be right because we pursue it," or because our family, the members of our church, or our countrymen have always pursued it. A little wholesome suspicion of one's own authority to speak will effectively check the mischievous tendency so deplorably common, to interfere with the liberties of one's neighbour.



SUCCESS AND FAILURE.

Not failure, but low aim, is crime.

—Selected.

SUCCESS in life, to the majority of human beings, has but one meaning, namely, the acquisition of wealth. This idea has come to be so commonly accepted, that few, in our day, have either the wit or the courage to dispute it. The one great aim of all is to become rich, and to this they ruthlessly sacrifice any others, however desirable, which may stand between them and the cherished goal. Health, youth, friendship, family joys, even honour and reputation, in some instances, are held to be trifling considerations weighed against the chances of a short and successful race for wealth. Often, when it is too late, do men discover the extent and irretrievableness of the error into which they have fallen. The treasure for which they have laboured so unceasingly, perhaps unscrupulously, is found to be of no value compared with those that have been bartered for it.

The richest old man in the world is poorer than the poorest young one, and would be glad to change places with the latter if the possibility were within his reach. Money cannot purchase health, or youth, with its enthusiasm and almost endless capacity for enjoyment. With years comes inevitably a diminished interest in the uses to which money can be put, and the question “*Cui*

bono?" is the one which confronts and humiliates the possessor. More than one famous millionaire has had bitter moments of illumination in which his real self was revealed to him with startling distinctness as a melancholy failure.

The truly successful man is he whose hands are the cleanest, whose record of usefulness to others is the longest, and whose mental and moral powers have been the most highly developed. It is he who has enjoyed his life to the utmost, in a sense that places him beyond reproach. Success, viewed from this standpoint, is within the reach of all. In no sphere of life, however narrow, is a man or woman debarred from reaching out towards the higher life in which alone, the pure heart, the aspiring mind, is content to dwell. Outward circumstances are no cause of reproach to those who are shut off from the greater comforts and amenities of life ; it is the bareness and barrenness of the soul that disgrace the human individual. One may live in a hut and yet be the peer of a prince or a poet. One may live in a palace, and be fit only for the society of the stable or the pot-house. Failure is therefore a relative term, to be applied with discrimination. So is crime. The fact that the one is often mistaken for the other, merely proves the shortsightedness of men. To succeed in a low aim is an entirely discreditable achievement, whereas to fail in a high one detracts nothing from the honour of a man, but often leaves the impress of a greater nobility on his character.



THE PHILOSOPHIC SPIRIT.

To rule one's anger is well ; to prevent it is better.

—Edwards.

HE most childish of all defects is ill-temper. It is a fault peculiar to the undeveloped intelligence. Many persons grow to manhood and womanhood physically, while mentally remaining mere children. Their reasoning faculties lie forever in abeyance. To attain the most serious ends of life they have recourse to the tactics and tantrums of the nursery. Give them what they want, they are pleased and quiet. Deny them anything, circumvent, or disappoint them in the least or the greatest matter, and they fly into a rage. The thought of the unpleasant effects on others of this favourite proceeding never deters them. Even their vanity is not disturbed by the reflection that they are making themselves ridiculous, that, while perhaps outwardly appearing to be awed or subdued by their display of temper, those on whom it is vented, or who are simply witnesses of the scene, are secretly laughing at and despising them. Nor do they ever suspect from how much pleasant participation in the affairs of others they shut themselves out by the indulgence of an irritable disposition.

Some persons say they cannot help being angry. This is the common excuse—which is no excuse at all—given by every class of sinners when exhorted to for-

sake their evil ways. The intemperate man "cannot help" drinking; the profane one "cannot help" his irreverence, and so on. Others again, by dint of earnest and persistent efforts at self-control, succeed in obtaining a partial or complete mastery of their tempers, so that few suspect the turmoil excited in their breasts by untoward happenings. This, however, is not a real moral victory, since the temper is still there, and only its outward signs are suppressed. The actual triumph of reason over passion comes only when causes of annoyance cease to be such, because viewed in their true light. It is not only possible, but easy, to attain a degree of philosophical serenity which cannot be shaken by any of the ordinary contradictions, losses or frictions of daily life. An impartial analysis of a situation, a frank recognition of the inevitable, or a saving sense of humour will rarely fail to avert a fit of anger. Why is it that the scrapes and difficulties of others nearly always excite smiles or laughter, while one's own merely provoke one to ill-temper? Is it not merely that one's sense of humour is outweighed by the personal discomfort or annoyance consequent on a certain accident or emergency?

This need not be if a childish regard for one's own comfort and security in little things is made subservient to the more dignified determination to take things coolly, quietly and with the certain knowledge that any temporary loss or inconvenience will be forgotten in a day.

The physical effects of anger constantly indulged are scarcely less serious than the moral ones. Says "*Popular Science*" :

"Every time a man becomes 'white' or red with anger he is in danger of his life. The heart and brain are the organs mostly affected when fits of passion are indulged in. Not only does anger cause partial paralysis of the small blood vessels, but the heart's action becomes intermittent; that is, every now and then it drops a beat, much the same thing as is experienced by excessive smokers."

There is every good reason, then, for controlling a disposition to irritability. Controlling it does not suffice. The complete cure is effected only by acquiring a modicum of philosophy which enables one to perceive the relation of causes and effects, and which hinders one from over-valuing the trifling and transient things of life, while attaching little or no value to what alone is precious and worth seeking from afar.



XCVII

OUR DESERTS.

We may be pretty certain that persons whom all the world treats ill deserve entirely the treatment they get. The world is a looking glass, and gives back to every man the reflection of his own face. Frown at it and it will in turn look sourly at you ; laugh at it and with it and it is a jolly, kind companion ; and so let all young persons take their choice.

—Vanity Fair.

THIE majority of us find an extraordinary degree of satisfaction in fastening the blame for our misfortunes on others. We seldom stop to think that this attitude is childish and undignified. It is, of course, equivalent to a confession of weakness, or utter incapacity. If we cannot direct our own affairs successfully, if we have not sufficient intelligence and foresight to steer clear of the difficulties that beset our path, if we lack the firmness and tact necessary to keep intruders out of our way while we attend to our affairs, then, indeed, we are but sorrily equipped for the battle of life, and it is high time we bestirred ourselves to effect the necessary improvement in our character and disposition. Nothing is more fatal to independent and effective action than the habit of leaning on and looking to others for assistance and support in the trials of life. We must learn to stand on our own feet, to accept with equanimity the consequences of our own actions,

and to govern our lives without reference to the successes or failures of those who may be more or less fortunate than we. There are persons who court poverty by extravagance or wastefulness, who invite rebuffs by their presumption, who earn contempt by their selfishness, or inspire repugnance by slovenly habits. But while thus deliberately violating accepted canons of taste and principles of right living, they openly resent the infliction of the punishment that suits their crime. They demand, as a right, that the world shall treat them with the same distinction accorded to the prudent, the modest, the generous and the conscientious man or woman, whom none can fail to admire and love.

There are always good grounds for suspicion regarding the alleged grievances of the person who calls him or herself misunderstood. A really loveable man or woman is always beloved. A tiresome, exacting, disagreeable one is disliked and avoided. So when we meet with rebuffs, coldness, neglect or asperity on the part of others, let us not be in haste to charge them with ingratitude, unkindness or severity. Let us, first, hold up the looking-glass to ourselves and ascertain wherein we have displeased. Be sure, if we look well enough, we shall not fail to find that what we have had to endure has justly been merited by our own offences or shortcomings.



XCVIII

SERVING ONE MASTER.

God gives us always strength enough and sense enough for everything He wants us to do.

—Selected.

THREE is not a much sadder sight in this world than that of an overworked, careworn woman, and it is one which, unhappily, is by no means uncommon in our country. The pathos of the situation is, however, much diminished by the discovery that in many instances women voluntarily assume a burden too heavy for their slender shoulders, and refuse to be guided by those who urge on them the duty of relinquishing all unnecessary responsibility. That there is a virtue in unselfishness no one will deny, but that it may become a vice is equally certain. To spend one's whole life in effacing one's self for the benefit of others is by no means as praiseworthy an achievement as some women appear to think. Your own life, as well as any other, has its value, its dignity, its part to play in the Creator's scheme, and to overlook this important fact is to fail in a duty which you alone can and ought to perform. To attempt tasks beyond your strength or capacity is an abuse of the opportunities afforded you for the reasonable exercise of your physical or mental powers. God is not an exacting task-master. It does not please Him to see you toiling incessantly and to the point of utter exhaustion. You are doing more than

He wants you to do when you refrain from taking needed rest and recreation. He has placed you in a beautiful world that you may enjoy it. He has ordained that you shall work, but He has placed the seal of dignity upon labour. If you permit it to degenerate into slavery and degradation, it is because you are straining after a false ideal, because you are consumed by a misplaced ambition. Do we not see mothers on all sides of us wearing themselves out in pitifully futile efforts to compete with others more highly favoured by circumstances? Does God want them to do that? Think how many useless burdens would slip from wearied shoulders if that single question were asked of one's self over and over through the day, "Does God want me to do it?" instead of, "What will the neighbours think?" which is the criterion the average woman seems feverishly anxious to live by.

Let us not complain too bitterly therefore when we are weary and heavy-laden. We know the gracious invitation, "Come to Me....and I will refresh you." It is our own fault if we do not lay down our burdens at the feet of the Master, and pursue our way with a lightened heart, freed from the distracting problems that confront all who substitute worldly ambition for the pure and earnest desire of serving one Master and Him alone.

If we are satisfied to do what He wants us to do we shall find strength enough for the divinely imposed tasks. But if we persist in struggling to serve other masters as well, let us be careful not to add to the offence of a divided allegiance the still greater one of blaming our Maker for misfortunes of our own deliberate creation.

THE UNREFORMED REFORMER.

We have no gratitude for those reformers who would force upon us a doctrine which has not sweetened their own tempers, or made them better men than their neighbours.

—W. E. Channing.

 To say we have no gratitude for those who would like to reform us before reforming themselves, expresses very mildly the feeling excited in the average human breast by the kind of interference referred to. An uncommon amount of patience is required to enable one to put up with the too obvious solicitude for our spiritual welfare, of persons whose own moral deficiencies persistently loom large before our eyes. We are, perhaps, restrained by a habit of civility from reminding the would-be reformer of his own sinful proclivities, and it is here that he enjoys a decided advantage over us. He has none of the delicate reticence which forbids allusion to the private concerns of others. He is possessed with the idea that to be virtuous means to keep a strict watch on his fellow-creatures, and to let them know that his eye is on them by pulling them up sharply whenever they say or do anything that excites his disapproval. Needless to say, he (sometimes he is a she) is the most unpopular person in any community, and the least likely of all to accomplish any good work in the world.

The most effectual rebuke that can be administered

to a sinner is the "white flower of a blameless life," growing daily in beauty under his eyes. With this before him, there will be no need to admonish or reprove him. Actions speak louder than words, and are longer remembered.

A human life, good or bad, is so many-sided, that it is not for the wisest of us to judge of the whole from one or more of the facets turned towards us. A hypocrite often passes for a saint, and good men who have never done a wrong or mean action are often scored as the worst of sinners for failing to conform to some little village standard of morality. A devout person feels troubled about another who has less frequent recourse to prayer, yet it may well be that the latter leads the larger, nobler life of the two. There are women who would not miss a single church service, week-day or Sunday, yet who are known to be morbidly inquisitive, idle, greedy, given to gossip, worldliness, and other weaknesses of the flesh. Those who have not the temperament to enjoy or profit by conventional forms of worship, may have a deeper sense of reverence for holy things, and pursue a loftier ideal with far greater earnestness.

But bounded as we all are by limitations that are only too obvious to the least observing, we should not dare to assume the censorship of another's life. To speak in the plainest terms, it is not our business to improve our neighbours, but ourselves. Good sense, good manners, and true charity should all combine to restrain us from assuming a prerogative which belongs to the Creator alone.

C

THE DIGNITY OF LABOUR.

*Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
Makes that and the action fine.*

—George Herbert.

TO be able to dignify and even ennoble the commonest tasks by dedicating them to the service of the Master, is the prerogative of every Christian woman. Under compulsion of circumstances, she should be ready to perform the most disagreeable household drudgery, sacrificing none of her fine womanly instincts and tastes, but rather revealing them the more conspicuously, though it may be unconsciously, against a background usually associated with what is coarse and destitute of charm.

A case in point, which affords an admirable lesson for housekeepers who are unable to keep servants, is that of the lay sisters in religious communities. These good women spend their days performing all the ordinary household duties of the large establishments they live in, cooking, washing dishes and floors, sweeping, dusting and otherwise ministering to the material comfort of the sisters. They never complain, nor compare their lot enviously with that of the more favoured members of the community. They neither expect nor receive remuneration, but they have a sublime faith in the spiritual value of every task faithfully accomplished, and this gives them invincible patience to meet the

constant demands on their time and strength. Yet they cannot be called drudges or menials, because they are at all times neat and dignified in appearance, and are treated with kindness and respect by their superiors, who call them "sisters," and see that, however onerous their tasks, a certain part of their busiest days is allotted to prayer and recreation.

What a contrast to their peaceful and happy lives are those of many housekeepers, who grumble at the least as well as the greatest task imposed on them, who for want of system, are always behindhand with their work, and, therefore, unable to take needed rest and recreation, who make their occupations an excuse for personal neglect and untidiness, and who deeply resent the immunity enjoyed by others from the cares that press on their shoulders.

It is possible to make all our actions fine if only we have sufficient respect for ourselves and for the One we serve. Common work may degrade common people, but a woman of native refinement, instead of being a slave to circumstances, rises superior to them, and leaves the stamp of taste and individual charm on everything touched by her hands.



CI

MEA CULPA.

If you prepare a dish of food carelessly, you do not expect Providence to make it palatable.

—John Ruskin.

WE commit an offence verging on blasphemy when we dare to attribute to the will of Providence, results that have been brought about purely by our own carelessness or deliberate wrong-doing. Women are inveterate sinners in this respect, men, as a rule, being more ready to recognize the consequences of their mistakes. It is a purely feminine prerogative to wring one's hands in presence of a catastrophe and wonder how God could permit such things to take place, while a moment's reflection would suffice to trace the seeming "accident" to grave negligence, ignorance or foolhardiness on the part of some human being. The intervention of Providence, under the circumstances, would be equivalent to an invitation to the culprit to repeat his carelessness. Even the most direful penalties incurred by human rashness and incompetence do not always suffice to compel prudence and forethought. What then would be the limit of our recklessness if Providence stood ever beside us for the purpose of saving us from its consequences?

Failure, loss and disaster, viewed logically, are in reality valuable lessons permitted by Providence to teach us humility, discretion, patience, and the proper

exercise of our reasoning and administrative faculties. We need just such rebukes to check our overweening self-confidence and complacency. Our helplessness in the face of a great catastrophe or irretrievable loss reveals to us with startling clearness the limitations of human power, and the urgent necessity of bringing all the intelligence and conscience we are endowed with to bear on the work we have in hand.

It is only when we have exhausted all the legitimate means of helping ourselves at our disposal, that we are entitled to look to Providence for a gracious intervention in our behalf. It would be the highest presumption to assume that the Creator should do the work assigned to us, be it easy or difficult. Neither in the preparation of a dish nor in the management of the affairs of a nation have we any right to expect a manifestation of Divine favour. When we have been furnished with the means and the strength to accomplish our appointed tasks, the part of Providence has been fully and perfectly performed. It remains for us to do the rest.

There is such a thing as being ungenerous in our relations towards God. To avoid such an ungrateful attitude we have but to refrain from shirking the blame incurred by our own misdoing and throwing it on Providence. Let us have the honesty to own ourselves at fault and to recognize the fact that Divine justice is unalterable and unassailable.



THE WEAK MIND.

Two things there are indicative of a weak mind, to be silent when it is proper to speak, and to speak when it is proper to be silent.

THE proper exercise and government of the gift of speech is an art susceptible of a high degree of cultivation. In it lies the secret of the highest personal charm. It is, besides, the readiest and most effective instrument for promoting good feeling, and diffusing happiness wherever its influence is felt. Some persons, like Tammas Mitchell, of Drumtochty, labour under a perpetual disability of speech, and when forced by some dire emergency to give utterance to a mono-syllable or two, convey the impression of being thoroughly frightened at the sound of their own voices. Others, again, when they begin to speak,—like the little babbling brook—“go on for ever,” so that peace-loving mortals who are not indifferent to the value of silence and repose at reasonable intervals, flee away in terror at their approach. Between the rocks of garrulity and taciturnity, which are the Scylla and Charybdis of conversation, flows the silver stream of tactful speech, locked at intervals by the golden gates of discreet silence.

Fluency and versatility in conversation are not common, even where a certain degree of culture has been attained : yet one may entirely lack education and still

be a most interesting and agreeable speaker. To this end, it is only necessary to speak with conviction of the things whereof one knows, leaving carefully untouched those subjects which are beyond one's ken. To confess ignorance of a subject introduced in conversation is a proof of honesty and courage, but to plunge into a discussion for which one is disqualified, by previous education and training, affecting a knowledge one has never acquired, is to convict one's self of shallowness and deceit.

"Conversation," says Anne Jameson, "may be compared to a lyre with seven chords—philosophy, art, poetry, politics, love, scandal, and the weather. There are some professors, who, like Paganini, 'can discourse most eloquent music,' upon one string only ; and some who can grasp the whole instrument, and with a master's hand sound it from the top to the bottom of its compass."

Without aspiring to achieve distinction of this kind, the average mortal may be content with acquiring a certain ease in his ordinary conversational intercourse with his fellows. Do not be niggardly of speech. Say as many pleasant words as you can in the day. In many families, words are spared to such an extent that conversation is never indulged in, except when strictly necessary. The friendly morning salutation is omitted, and breakfast proceeds in silence. If an announcement of general interest is made, it is received with grunts of approval or disapproval, but elicits no comment. The various members disperse to attend to their daily tasks without exchanging a word with one another. How different from this gloomy silence and unsociableness is the atmosphere of the home where pleasant speech circulates freely, and where a nod, or a grunt, is never permitted to do duty for a polite request or expression of thanks! It is surprising how much good

feeling is promoted in families by the free use of just the ordinary courteous phrases prescribed by politeness.

As regards intercourse with strangers, a kind, unselfish interest in them and a desire to please, will greatly facilitate pleasant conversation. Most persons are responsive to a little sympathy, when it does not take the form of impertinent curiosity. On the other hand, discretion bids us be silent when a companion is plainly disinclined for speech, or disposed to be argumentative, sarcastic, or domineering. One must not talk much in the presence of one's elders or superiors, nor in a sick room, nor in the presence of great sorrow. With a little reflection, it is easy to determine when to speak and when to be silent, so as to avoid those mistakes of tact and judgment which, according to the Persian sage, are indicative of a weak mind.



CIII

THE DIGNITY OF FOOD.

There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink.

—Ecclesiastes ii., 24.

HISTORY repeats itself. “The woman gave me and I did eat,” was Adam’s explanation of his first sin. How many times since the fall might not the same words have been used to palliate various transgressions of the sons of men!

Philosophers and moralists have not hesitated to trace an incalculable amount of the misery and wickedness that darken the earth to the imperfect digestion, or empty stomachs, of their perpetrators. A man is what he eats, and in the majority of cases, he eats what some woman gives him. Great, therefore, is the responsibility that rests on the provider of meals, and strictly should she examine her conscience from time to time on the subject of the dishes she prepares for the delectation of her lord and master.

No woman should be allowed to marry who does not understand the properties of different kinds of food, and how best to preserve them in the ordinary culinary processes. Whether she expects to have many servants or not, it is a shame to her if she cannot, in an emergency, take possession of her own kitchen, and prepare such appetizing and nourishing dishes for her husband as shall make him rise up and call her blessed.

If, as frequently happens, a girl is promoted to wifehood without having received any previous training in domestic science, it is her solemn duty to apply herself immediately and earnestly to the task of mastering the secrets of good cookery. She is not a wife in the true and complete sense if she has not realized that, as the Scripture says : " There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink."

Unfortunately, many women have such a depraved sense of taste that they are themselves unable to discern between well and ill-cooked food.

Dried up meats and sloppy vegetables, fearful and wonderful soups and gravies, messy puddings and sodden cake, boiled tea and half-baked bread are some of the delicacies regularly found upon their tables. Even such elementary courses as porridge and toast appear in the strangest guise, generally burnt or cold, or both. The unhappy man who is expected to thrive on such a diet grumbles, perhaps until he is weary of it, but finally resigns himself to the inevitable, with the certain prospect before him of a ruined digestion and shortened life. Poor fellow! the woman gives him, and he does eat!

But every man is not in such evil case. The good wife is not rare who makes it a point of honour to place on her table only the soundest and most carefully prepared food. She knows how to keep the juices in the meat, and the water out of the vegetables, and the heat in all, until the moment of serving. Her gravies and sauces are as good to look at as they are flattering to the palate. She believes in an honest pudding of good rich materials, and when these are lacking, does without rather than dignify with that name a wishy-washy compound, looking suspiciously like baby's food or a bread-poultice. She has a wholesome prejudice against pie crust that is fork-proof, and cake that is sodden, and tea

of an hour's standing. In short, she knows that it is good not only for man, but equally for woman, to eat and drink only what is pleasant and wholesome, and, acting on that conviction, she makes the providing of meals the most serious business of life. Does it consume all her time and energies? By no means. Good judgment and system aiding, the task appears more and more simple as experience grows, and ultimately it becomes almost impossible for her to make mistakes. She has leisure for lighter and more congenial labours, and is never grudged the pleasures they yield her. Her reward is in the health and contentment of her husband, and the beauty of her children, as well as in the love and pride with which they regard her.

It is in the power of almost every woman to achieve this kind of success and popularity. That there should be any without the ambition to secure it is a mystery inexplicable save on the grounds of defective intelligence.



CIV

INNOCENCE.

Know thou nothing that is base.

—Owen Meredith.

 F human attributes, the one which brings us nearest to the angels is innocence. A soul that has never been sullied by the knowledge of evil is something exquisitely beautiful to contemplate. To find such an one, outside the ranks of childhood, is a rare experience. Yet it need not be, if mothers would but guard the precious innocence of their daughters more jealously, training them to close every avenue of sense and emotion against the insidious poison that may otherwise be drawn in at every breath, and from sources apparently the most harmless. A girl, also, can do much herself to preserve her ignorance of evil. It should be a source of pride to her that she knows "nothing that is base." This is the fairest accomplishment, the highest charm, the most potent attraction she can ever make her own. But it is of all her treasures the most perishable, and the only one which, once lost, is lost irrevocably.

Unfortunately, evil has a fatal attraction for young minds, and as it is impossible to screen it, in all its manifold aspects, from their observation, the task of preserving the innocence of children becomes one of well-nigh insuperable difficulty. The most powerful counter-agent of unfavourable influences is a mother's

love and sympathy. Constant vigilance ceases to be a necessity when there exists between parent and child that sweet and perfect intimacy which comes of mutual love and trust. Undue severity checks the confidence a child would like to repose in her mother, and the doubts and perplexities which have been awakened in her mind by some speech or action suggestive of evil, instead of being explained and banished by discreet counsel and guidance, stick pertinaciously in her thoughts, to her ultimate injury. A careful mother will read in her child's face what is passing in her heart, and at the first intimation of danger to perfect innocence will take loving means to efface any injurious impressions received, and will endeavour to substitute for them an increased interest in what is pure and beautiful.

Teach a growing girl to love useful occupation, healthy pastimes, good books, flowers, trees, birds, music, fill her with a desire to make other lives happy and beautiful, and she will find so much to interest her mind and employ her energies, that she will be in little if any danger of coming under evil influences.



HEROISM IN SMALL THINGS.

All great duties are easier than the little ones, though they cost far more blood and agony.

—Phillips Brooks.

THE hero of a hundred battles whose bravery in the hour of danger is attested by as many scars from shot and steel, would probably be goaded to madness if condemned to endure the same number of pin pricks. The man who is most indifferent to great hardships is likely to be the least tolerant of small ones. The same is not untrue of our sex, but illustrations are less frequent, since it is our usual lot to be exposed only to the pin-pricks, while duly safe-guarded against sword and cannon-ball. No glory attaches to the thousand conquests of self made every day by the wife and mother intent on the fulfilment of her duties to her husband and children. She must be content to do and suffer in silence, knowing that only by a lapse from duty on her part are others brought to realize the greatness of the demands made daily upon her time, strength and patience. It would not become her to speak of her ever-recurring trials and difficulties, she would, at best, receive but an indifferent hearing and rob the fruit of her efforts of their sweetest savour. Nothing remains for her then but to brace up her nerves and spirits to the point of heroic endurance in little things, trusting that one day the grand aggregate of all her efforts will

be represented by a well-rounded life, free from haunting doubts or bitter self-accusings.

This is real heroism in woman, more real than that which sends the trained nurse to the battlefield or the missionary to the land of the unfriendly heathen. Indeed, without seeking to detract from the merits of such as undertake these dangerous offices, it is not unfair to say, that often the exciting prospect of change, travel, and adventure, is so much more attractive to a restless woman than the alternative of staying at home under distasteful conditions, that her choice of the first is less a proof of devotion or heroism than the selfish adoption of a desperate measure to redeem a life unendurably circumscribed by the common-place. The world calls her a heroine, but the verdict finds no echo in her own heart, for often, in the midst of her most brilliant successes, the still small voice of conscience upbraids her as a deserter from the real post of duty. The blame, however, is not wholly on such as are goaded by intolerable conditions of life at home to seek new and broader fields for their energies and enthusiasms. Family life is often a species of purgatory for sensitive women. They crave the light and warmth of love and appreciation, but look for it vainly in a home where, through the selfishness and tyranny of a parent or other relative, all the sweet amenities of life are rudely ignored. It is hard for anyone to stand alone in this world. The forces that govern our separate lives are so inextricably intertwined, that to each of us falls a certain share of responsibility for the happiness of all. It may not be in our power to avert great misfortunes that threaten our near and dear ones, but from the little cares that eat the heart out we may lovingly shield them in many a dark and crucial hour. How eagerly we rush to the rescue of one who is physically hurt! Shall we be less tender to those who are crushed in

spirit? The stab of a bitter glance or cruel word goes deeper than a knife, and draws more blood. To bind up wounds like these, and allay the subsequent irritation, requires a more delicate surgery, and is a work of greater mercy than any ever practised in hospital wards or on the field of battle. Remembering these things, it will not be so hard to content ourselves with the performance of small duties, grudging no one the greater glamour that surrounds such acts of heroism as are seen and recognized by all.



SORROW'S SWEET USES.

We cannot understand what we have never experienced; we need pain, were it only to teach us sympathy.

—L. E. L.

 ET a woman possess every other grace and virtue she is capable of acquiring, but lack sympathy, and she will never know the true meaning of friendship. That subtle power which enables one to enter into the soul of another, divining its most secret sorrows and conflicts, belongs only to those who have been tried in the furnace of affliction, and who have come forth chastened, purified, with clearer vision, larger patience, and a more tender charity for all fellow-sufferers.

This is one of the sweetest uses of sorrow, that it joins in one great brotherhood all the hearts that have ever been buried beneath its weight. In the first dark hour one does not realize this truth, nor appreciate its beauty and value. But with the healing influences of time comes the enlarged perception which lends to life an entirely new aspect, and to our relations with others a kind of intimacy which would have been impossible before.

The veil of selfishness, of indifference, has been removed from our eyes. We see our own affairs in their true proportion to the affairs of others. Many matters, which had formerly seemed to us of transcendent interest and importance, now shrink into their real insignificance, and we marvel at the childishness which made us expend time and enthusiasm on them. Now that the iron has entered into our soul, we are no

longer susceptible to the pin-pricks that once had power to torture us, and being thus less occupied with thoughts of self, we have more leisure and opportunity to look abroad and see what is going on all about us. Here and there we notice men and women who have not yet been emancipated from the selfishness and indifference of a life of unalloyed happiness. How small and mean appear the aims of their contracted existence! How blind and deaf they are to the sights and sounds of woe that announce the sorrow of the world on every side. How they cumber the ground with their uselessness, adding pain to pain in aching hearts by the irritating spectacle of their undeserved immunity from trouble. We would not be of them—Oh no! not while myriads of voices are calling to us out of the night of sin and sorrow that encompasses the earth, not while there are so many tears to be dried, so many hungry mouths to be fed, so many tempted souls to be entreated back from the edge of the precipice. Let us be thankful rather, that we have been chosen to suffer, to learn the lessons of disappointment, loss, humiliation, that we in turn may teach others to endure similar trials of faith and patience. The reward of endurance comes with the sense of power which the exercise of sympathy imparts. When others, whom we had perhaps esteemed greater than ourselves, lean on us, and ask us to lead them, because we know the way, while their feet are newly set in the rugged paths, we are glad of that early taste of sorrow that fitted us for such consoling offices; we would not barter such a precious privilege for the longest life untouched by pain.

Perhaps these reflections may help some who are just entering the valley of tears to bear themselves nobly. They can do so in fullest confidence that their courage in the hour of trial will at no distant day, bear golden fruit of sympathy.

THE TWO CLASSES OF HUMANITY.

The human race is divided into two classes, those who go ahead and do something, and those who sit and inquire. "Why wasn't it done the other way?"

—Oliver Wendell Holmes.

WITH a glib tongue and a drop or two of envy, malice or uncharitableness, any woman who has a mind to, may, with very little practice, become an expert fault-finder. The recipe is so simple, and the ingredients so common, that it is less a matter for wonder than regret, that the number who choose to place themselves under this category, so greatly exceed that of their more progressive and practical sisters, "who go ahead and do something."

These latter may not be unqualified successes in the various lines of work they have taken up, nor can it be pretended that they are wholly free from the unamiable weakness which makes the self-constituted critic (of every one but herself) such a delightful person to get away from, but the mere fact of being intent on the performance of their chosen task, however humble, removes from them both the opportunity and the temptation to "sit and inquire" why their neighbours do not do their work another way.

One would think that a sense of pride and dignity would preserve women from betraying too curious an interest in the affairs of others, in no way related to

them, since the inference is, obviously, that their own affairs must be of very slight importance. But this consideration has no weight with some members of our sex, who make no secret of an overweening desire to know what their neighbours are doing, saying and thinking, and who find considerable enjoyment in the discussion of their discoveries, especially if these include any mistakes on the part of the persons under observation. Unless this tendency is checked in time, it develops into a positive passion, and the victim becomes a marked woman, from whom every other will carefully guard all knowledge of her personal affairs. By degrees, she is shut out from the confidence, friendship and even society, of all the best people she knows, and once having incurred the penalty of this social ostracism, she will find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to have it removed. To avoid such an unhappy fate, we have only to enlist ourselves among the workers, to "go ahead and do something," and in our determination to succeed we shall find so much satisfaction that the severest strictures of the fault-finders will have no power to disturb our serenity. We cannot avoid making mistakes, but when we need guidance it is not among the idle spectators of our efforts, but in the wisdom and experience of our masters and models that we shall find valuable counsel and assistance.



CVIII

THE LIMIT OF ASPIRATION.

*A friend whose friendship bids us come up higher ;
A wife who wears her wifehood as a crown ;
A mother whose home love no cares can down ;
To what more could one human life aspire ?*

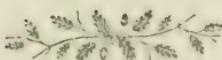
—Selected.

THERE is something pathetic in the blindness which hinders most of us from seeing the beautiful possibilities of happiness and praiseworthy achievement that lie just within our reach. The trouble is, they are too near us. It is only when we are transplanted from our ordinary daily environment into one wholly different that we realize the value of the opportunities we have lost. In perspective their full dimensions stand revealed. Yet we used to feel impatient when others tried to remind us of the high prerogatives and sweet privileges attached to the state that we despised and barely endured. We used to think, "What can they know about it ; they see only from the outside." Ah, but this critical survey from without, is exactly what is needed to help us to a just perception of things. Have you ever tried to look at your own life from the point of view of an unprejudiced spectator—one who would be strictly impartial in his judgments and logical in all his inferences ? Or suppose that a novelist was asked to depict your character with absolute fidelity to life. Suppose that all your

conversation was to be printed and made public ; that the changes of expression in your face, and the varying tones of your voice were to be minutely described ; that all your secret thoughts and motives, your loves and hatreds and ambitions were to be laid bare ? How do you think you would appear under this powerful search-light of close observation and psychological analysis ? Do you shrink from the thought of the moral exposure it would involve ? Have you a well-founded fear that it would bring dishonour or contempt on you, or do you feel that you can stand the ordeal, and at its close merit such words of praise as those I have placed at the head of this page ? Try the test, and it will perhaps show you a picture of your life as you have never seen it before. You will not find, I am pretty sure, that you have erred on the side of thankfulness for all that is good in your life.

According to some theologians, it is a part of the divine plan that we should quickly grow weary of every kind of earthly happiness, as thereby we learn to long for the joys of eternity. But it seems to me a higher Christianity to show a generous appreciation of the good things we are permitted to enjoy in this life. I confess I have never been able to feel much sympathy for the wife whose early tenderness towards her husband is replaced, in less than a year perhaps, by the habit of ceaseless nagging ; nor for the young mother whose first raptures soon degenerate into querulous complainings about her responsibilities ; nor for the girl whose delight in the true friendship of another is readily spoiled by feelings of envy or jealousy. Nobody pities a man whose elation over the sudden acquisition of great wealth quickly degenerates into a dull satiety that follows too much self-indulgence. But all these I have mentioned are in exactly the same case. So, if you have been chosen from among many

others to fill the office of a friend, a wife, or a mother, do not forget that there is matter for lasting joy and pride in the fact. Before you complain of an empty and colourless life, before casting wistful eyes in the direction of forbidden or inaccessible joys, be sure that you have extracted all the sweetness possible from one or other of those privileges which make you an object of envy to many another woman. Study those heroines of history or fiction whose circumstances bore any resemblance to yours, and see in what respect you fall short of their excellence. This kind of comparison is not calculated to increase one's self-esteem, but it is valuable in aiding one to detect certain blemishes of character that otherwise might never have been perceived, and in stimulating the determination to render one's self more worthy of the free gifts one has received at the hands of Providence.



CIX

MY GARDEN.

*Go, make thy garden as fair as thou canst,
Thou workest never alone;
Perchance he whose plot is next to thine
Will see it and mend his own.*

—Selected.

MANY letters come to me from young girls and married women who reside in small towns, or in the country, bewailing the dulness of their surroundings and the apathy of the people among whom they live. Sometimes, strange to say, two or three letters in this strain will come from one place, each making the same complaint that there is no one of any taste or refinement in the neighbourhood, that to organize any kind of club or awaken the interest of even half a dozen people in any scheme making for mutual entertainment and improvement would be a hopeless task.

Now, I cannot help wishing to ask each of these correspondents, "What do you, personally, do, to raise the tone of your community, or to vary the monotony of life in your village? Have you ever really tried to improve the conditions of your own existence, and shown others, by example, how to profit by the opportunities and advantages within their reach? Have you not, rather, folded your hands and contented yourself with idly protesting against the Fate that placed you where you are? You may fancy yourself hardly used,

because no one among the circle of your acquaintances is qualified to contribute to your entertainment, or to make your life in any sense, more interesting.

Now, suppose that instead of looking to others for distraction and inspiration, you made up your mind to be yourself a source of light and leading to the community, not in any vain desire to outshine the rest, but with the sincere hope of setting the wheels of progress in motion, would not this lend a new zest and meaning to your life?

The right way to set about it is to concentrate your time, thoughts and energies on some worthy object, until through all hindrances and discouragements, you attain success. The choice of an object will, of course, be restricted to those which you have the greatest facilities for pursuing. If you live on a farm, and have a little leisure, and a plot of ground at your disposal, you might, for instance, cultivate roses, chrysanthemums, or violets. Make a study of the conditions necessary for producing the best results, and aim as high as possible. Send your choicest flowers to the local exhibition, and if they are not the finest in the show, inquire into the reasons, and redouble your care and attention, until your efforts are crowned with the highest success. Consider the effect of this achievement alone, on all who may witness it. The example of a refined taste and of perseverance under difficulties will excite many others to similar endeavour. Your garden will be a source of local pride, and a new topic of conversation. Here, then, is one break in the hopeless dulness, and there is room for many more.

A young wife's forte may be the neatness of her house and the completeness of all her domestic arrangements. By continual attention to these details, she may become a pattern to all her neighbours, and incite them to a wholesome rivalry. A mother, by exercising

strict supervision over the appearance and manners of her children, may establish, unconsciously, a standard which all others will be emulous of reaching. In almost any direction a woman may find a worthy field for her efforts. The great point is, not to strive after originality, but only after proficiency, in some one branch of work. Never be satisfied until you excel all others in your chosen specialty. Consider how much richer life would be to us all if each of us stood pre-eminent in one line of achievement. No one can be called dull or stupid who takes a keen interest in some worthy pursuit. Any one subject is so linked with others that a mastery of it necessarily includes at least a bowing acquaintance with those which are kindred to it. And earnest workers, however their efforts may diverge, are all bound together by a chain of sympathy, such as is unknown to idlers and mere cumberers of the ground.

A girl who has no aptitude for manual work but who loves reading, can make herself a valuable member of any community by keeping herself well informed on all the most interesting topics of the day, and by proving herself an authority on questions relating to history or literature, especially poetry. To be able to indicate the origin of a familiar quotation without referring to books, to know the names, at least, of the works of the best authors, and something about their lives, is an accomplishment that lends a great charm and interest to one's conversation. Perfect familiarity with the works of even one famous writer, such as Dickens, Shakespeare, Thackeray, Scott or Tennyson, gives one a covetable sense of power, and is a source of pleasure to one's self and others.

A girl who has a little musical talent can make herself indispensable to her friends by learning to play without notes, all the most popular hymn-tunes, bits

from the favourite operas, ordinary dance music, and the accompaniments of well known songs. To know by heart the words of favourite songs and hymns is also a very useful accomplishment.

The next time any one is tempted to complain of the stupidity of her neighbours I hope she will first question herself as to whether she has "made her own garden as fair as she can." Until satisfied that our own personality is interesting and stimulating to others, it will become us better to be silent about the shortcomings of our neighbours.



CX

THE HIGHEST KNOWLEDGE.

*I do not hunger for a well-stored mind;
I only wish to live my life, and find
My heart in unison with all mankind.*

—Edmund Gosse.

THIE most precious truths are not found in books. The greatest intellectual profit is not acquired by storing the mind with the lore of others more learned than we.

To live is better than to read about life, though to many it would seem that the value of their actual experiences and opportunities never becomes apparent until they have been taught to see it through the eyes of some thoughtful writer. Therefore it is good to be acquainted with books, and with the opinions of wise men, not with a view merely of becoming learned, but because familiarity with great minds engenders a habit of high thinking and sharpens the perceptions to a degree that stimulates the mind to independent observation.

Education is a relative term which conveys to no two minds the same impression. Some men are well-educated who have never entered a school, and others who can display certificates by the score will remain invincibly ignorant to the end. It is the power of assimilating knowledge which determines the degree of education in every individual.

Not what you learn by rote and rule gives you superiority over the untrained mind, but the great principles you have grasped and learned to apply to the practical affairs of life.

To suspend a rule often argues a greater intelligence than to observe it. To dismiss needless details and data from the memory is a truer intellectual economy than to retain them. Science is mighty, but there are times when sentiment is of superior importance. Unless the heart is "in unison with all mankind," one's conception of life will necessarily be narrowed, one's relations to one's kind restricted. It is easy to measure one's intellectual and spiritual progress by this test. The man or woman who looks with scorn or indifference on any class of humanity, thereby proclaims a defect in his or her education. There is plainly a failure to perceive the divine plan, to sympathize with the objects of creation, to apprehend ever so faintly, the relation of the Creator to His creatures. As soon, however, as the mind is capable of grasping these conceptions there is a distinct advance in the direction of true knowledge, the value of which is far above that contained in all the books that were ever written.

The vanity of those who dabble in arts and sciences and deem themselves thereby the superiors of their fellows, who are honestly ignorant of such high matters, is a sorry sight compared with the humility of the truly ripe scholar who knows that the end of human knowledge is but the beginning of that which is to come. He, like the poet, learns, soon or late, that the "well-stored mind" avails little or naught unless the heart be

"in unison with all mankind."

THE BORE.

*We are all travellers in this world, and most of us
are tiresome to other people. Happy the man who is
not tiresome to himself!*

--W. Pett Ridge.

CIVILIZATION has its disadvantages. Not the least of these is the doom of being bored which inevitably awaits the polite of all ages and nations.

Deprived by the laws of civilized states from recourse to the barbarian's ready and effective method of eliminating objectionable persons from his environment, and restrained by still more stringent social conventions from indulgence in even those little revenges of speech and manner in which the ladies of the fish-market, and others of their ilk find instantaneous relief for their outraged feelings, the unfortunate respectable and cultivated classes of humanity are utterly defenceless against the attacks of their ubiquitous and relentless enemy—the bore! To escape bodily from his persecutions, in plain parlance, to run away, is the only alternative open to his hapless victims. And there are times when even this undignified—but effectual—resource is cut off, and the sufferer must perforce resign himself to the polite necessity of exercising a heroic control over his temper (and, haply, his fists), until the bore, having accomplished his fell purpose, voluntarily departs in search of a fresh victim.

Considering the numerical strength of the bore and the unceasing imminence of his descent upon the just and unjust alike, his facilities for poisoning the peace of his fellow-mortals are indeed of a formidable character. Yet, evil as is the case of any one exposed to his onslaughts, the situation is at least not wholly desperate, since there is always an ultimate hope of respite. The infliction must necessarily be of a temporary character.

Not so, however, in the case of the man who is tiresome to himself. Could any fate be more discouraging? From this worst of all bores, Self, even the alternative of running away is denied one. A craving for constant companionship, good or bad, for any kind of excitement that may temporarily obliterate the oppressive self-consciousness of the victim is the surest symptom of this unhappy condition. Under its influence, every diversion and change, even sorrows and reverses, are welcome as preferable to the unendurable monotony of an existence which no effort of will appears to be able to brighten or dignify.

The personal feelings, experiences, affairs, of the man who is a bore to himself, appear to him always profoundly uninteresting, while those of his neighbours, or acquaintances, are invested in his eyes with a distinction, a character of novelty, which excite his curiosity and compel his attention to an extraordinary degree. Unfortunately, the disgust he entertains towards himself occasionally communicates itself to others, and his too eager interest in his neighbour's affairs is liable to be met with coldness or suspicion. Thus gradually he becomes a bore, not only to himself but to everybody else, and truly the last state of that man shall be worse than the first.

To avoid such an unpleasant fate, it is only necessary to bestow a proper degree of attention on one's self,

with a view of bringing one's faculties and powers to the highest state of development of which they are capable. Until one learns to compel one's own respect by following a line of conduct which places one above reproof, one shall never know the real joy of living; nor experience the normal, healthy stimulus to thought, feeling and action which comes from within, and which invests every new personal experience with a value to the individual that is not affected, or but slightly so, by the world's appraisings.

Happy, indeed, is that man or woman who, in enforced solitude, finds cheerful companionship in his or her own thoughts, occupations, or memories. Any who fail to realize this desirable condition inevitably miss the purest and deepest pleasures of existence, and remain incapable of ministering in any appreciable degree to the happiness of their fellow-creatures.



SELF-RESTRAINT.

A good memory knows how to forget, a well-managed tongue knows how to keep still, disciplined ears know how to be deaf on occasions, and skilful hands can hang idle, if necessary. One-half of knowledge consists in not knowing; one-half of beneficial action in resting.

—Selected.

A VERY common and serious defect in members of our sex who are striving to lead exemplary lives, is the excess of energy, of zeal and of nervous force they bring to bear on the accomplishment of ordinary duties. They acquire the habit of incessant activity, and an alertness to improve every opportunity, which may be eminently satisfying to their own conscience, but which is apt to make them extremely impatient, exacting, and occasionally unjust towards others.

Undoubtedly, much has been gained when one has acquired a habit of industry, and brought all one's faculties to a high degree of cultivation, but there is such a thing as becoming a slave to one's perfections; and thus converting them into stumbling-blocks to ourselves and to our neighbour.

The ideal life is the one which is kept unhampered by conditions or customs not essential to its highest purposes, so that the mind is free, at any moment, to exercise a choice dictated by friendship or judgment.

There is a type of woman who will do a hard day's work quite cheerfully, but who cannot contain her impatience if forced to be idle for an hour. Her capacities, from long habit, and a misdirection of energy, have become limited to manual exercise of one kind or another. She has forgotten that she has a mind, a soul, which she grievously neglects, and to which she will not even give ungrudgingly, the attention that is not claimed by the occupation of her hands.

Most of us have lived long enough to know that any day an unexpected delay, an inopportune visit, an accident, may interrupt the performance of appointed tasks. To exhibit vexation or disappointment in such obviously inevitable emergencies, is both childish and unchristian. They should be accepted with the best possible grace, as a part of the Creator's great plan, of which our separate lives are but insignificant details.

Give me the woman of good sense and resource, who, when she is thwarted in one direction, readily turns her attention to another, and even when handicapped on all sides, makes a virtue of idleness by taking a much needed rest or an opportunity for meditation on some of the higher meanings of life.

Give me also the generous heart which, with an unfailing memory for kindnesses received, is prompt to forget injuries, and the shortcomings of neighbours. In its company, we generally find the well-governed tongue, which refrains from pronouncing the word that pains or brings confusion on another. Often a drop of malice lurks under an ostensible desire to say "a word in season" to an erring sister. It is a word conspicuously out of season when it touches a tender place in her feelings. That duty may well be left to those whose profession it is to care for souls. Let neighbours and friends be silent concerning one another's faults ; if they are sincere Christians they will be amply occu-

pied in correcting their own. In this respect, indeed, “one-half of knowledge consists in not knowing,” because such ignorance saves one from many sins of the tongue ; therefore, it is profitable, in the highest sense, “to be deaf on occasions.”

A complacent belief in one’s own goodness is one of the most fatal hindrances to spiritual progress ; those who are in danger of laying such flattering unction to their souls will find food for thought in the lines above quoted. It might perhaps surprise them greatly to discover that by suspending for a time some of their imaginary virtues, including a self-imposed censorship of their neighbour’s conduct, and a passion for work which admits of no consideration for the rights and comforts of others, they would be making a distinct step forward in moral progress as well as in the estimation of their long-suffering friends and acquaintances.



CXIII

RELAXATION.

There is no duty we so much underrate as the duty of being happy.

—R. L. Stevenson.

N one respect, if in no other, do men habitually demonstrate their superiority over our sex, and that is in their readiness to take the fullest measure of enjoyment out of every favourable opportunity that presents itself.

Outside of the world that lives for amusement, it is the exceptional woman who takes her pleasures other than sadly, and without a secret feeling of remorse for the time and money spent on what seems to her a purely frivolous purpose. Many even take credit to themselves for this attitude of mind, as if it were a virtue, when, in reality, it is a serious defect of character, indicating a warped and one-sided sense of duty, as well as a narrow and unjust conception of the Deity.

It is not a hard, exacting task-master whom we serve, but a kind, indulgent Father, who has surrounded us on every side, with abundant material for the purest enjoyment. To ignore this provision of His love, to shut ourselves up in a cage which we miscall our duty, and to look disapprovingly on those who include happiness among the aims of existence, is to announce ourselves largely deficient in gratitude, in judgment, and indeed, in the true religious instinct.

To live a right life we must work, it is true, but in work, as in pleasure, we must practice temperance, remembering that the worker is greater than her task and should never therefore be enslaved by it. An over-conscientious woman usually falls into this error of servile devotion to what she ignorantly believes to be her duty, to the detriment of all those sweet and joyous instincts of the heart that plead for rest, refreshment, and agreeable diversion from toil and daily cares. From long and systematic repression of these God-given instincts, many wives and mothers, in time, completely lose the faculty of personal enjoyment, and when the burden of their responsibility is at last lifted from their shoulders, they are bewildered and even unhappy, being without inclination for the pleasures which their new-found leisure has placed within their reach.

The saddest part about a life thus perverted from its noblest uses, is, that the husband and children whom a woman falsely imagines can best be served by a kind of slavery, are more often than not pained and humiliated by the knowledge of her perpetual sacrifices to their comfort. They would be more genuinely happy if she, too, were happy, and willing to enter generously now and then into their plan for a holiday which might include one for her.

Do not then grudge a day's postponement of some common domestic duty, when there is a question of an excursion to the woods or on the river ; and even, from day to day, do not deny yourself the little harmless relaxations and pleasures that come in your way, that will leave smiles instead of wrinkles on your face, and lend a cheerful, instead of a querulous note to your voice.

You are sometimes disappointed, after a laborious day, when your husband and sons fail to notice any improvement in the rooms on which you have expended

so much work. Learn from this that their happiness does not depend so much on a waste of physical exertion on your part, as on the sympathetic mood which brings a bright smile of welcome to your lips, and makes them feel that where you are, supposing everything else is lacking, is home indeed.

The habit of toiling and moiling incessantly, once acquired, is not easily cured, but young housekeepers, who are as yet in the experimental stage of domestic experience, may derive much benefit from reflecting and acting on the advice of the Scotch novelist. Especially in the sweet summer months, let them make a duty of being happy as often and as long as their circumstances permit. Let them say sometimes with the poet :

“ O gift of God ! O perfect day !
Whereon shall no man work, but play,
Whereon it is enough for me
Not to be doing, but to be.”



THE PLACE OF QUIETNESS.

Bread is good and knowledge is better, but best of all is peace, and the place of quietness has ever been and ever will be a garden.

—Ian Maclaren.

WHEN skies are fair on a summer day, what better company can be found anywhere than awaits every comer in a beautiful garden? The restful verdure of grass and shrub and vine, the fragrant blooms in bed and border, the sheltering trees, the fleecy, wandering clouds, the refreshing breeze, the soothing hum of insect life, the sweet notes of birds, the bees and butterflies chasing one another from honeyed calyx to calyx, the mysterious and incessant whispering and nodding of the leaves—where else can one discover a scene so full of variety, animation, beauty and surpassing interest?

Yet there are men and women so incredibly blind, lazy, stupid or sordid, that they are content to go through life without making the slightest attempt to procure for themselves or their children this pleasure, which is scarcely surpassed by any other, and which is within reach of all but the very poor.

It takes so little space and trouble to make a garden! Not a formally laid-out and trimly-kept inclosure with showy beds of expensive annuals, such as one looks for around the stately homes of the rich, but a simple plot

made sweet with old-fashioned perennials, that you after year come up with the first breath of Spring, like old friends returning from a long absence in a foreign land. In some of these favoured spots, each tree and shrub has a history ; some were planted by hands now folded away forever : some by the little ones who have since grown to manhood or womanhood, and gone to distant homes of their own : one stands for friendship, one for love ; one marks the advent of a new life in the home, another the beginning of some important enterprise.

But even without this association of ideas which links them to the fortunes of the owners, all these growing things are beautiful and restful to the eye, full of consolation and peace for the heart. Under their soothing influences, it is wonderful how quickly the common worries and vexations inseparable from indoor life melt away and disappear. An hour of solitude that would seem intolerably long in the house, is magically shortened to half its duration amid the delights of the garden.

The first provision made for the perfect happiness of man was a beautiful garden. The penalty inflicted on him for sin was expulsion from the garden. His chief care thereafter was the cultivation of the wilderness into which he was driven that it might become a semblance at least, of the lost Paradise. Surely no further argument is needed to prove that a garden is the ideal retreat, whether for rest, recreation, or prayer.

The garden should be close to the house, since the exigencies of climate compel us to live under a roof made with hands. However small, even if confined within the cramped dimensions of a city back-yard, it can easily be made a thing of beauty. A few slips of ivy or Virginia creeper will, in a short time, cover all unsightliness of blank wall or unpainted fence. Two

or three saplings from the woods will provide for future shade. A trifling outlay on seeds and cuttings will yield golden returns of bloom and fragrance. Such a little breathing-place as this, where the tired house-keeper or restless children can betake themselves for rest and recreation, or for the lighter tasks that cannot be put off, exercises a most beneficent influence in the home. Monotonous occupations, such as sewing, darning or ironing, when pursued out-of-doors, lose half their wearisomeness and become almost a pleasure. The favourite book, read in a shady arbour, leaves on the mind an impression which is indelibly associated with the place and season, thus becoming a doubly delightful memory. Yes, by all means, let us have a garden.



CHAINS OF HABIT.

The diminutive chains of habit are generally too small to be felt till they are too strong to be broken.

—Dr. Johnson.

TO estimate properly the tremendous force of habit, one has only to try the experiment of breaking away from it. Even an accidental interruption to the established routine of our daily life is regarded as an unmitigated infliction, and one which, beyond a certain point, the sweetest tempered among us cannot endure patiently. But voluntarily to relinquish a regular custom, pastime, or occupation, or even to alter our usual manner of doing anything involves an effort to which, except under the pressure of extraordinary circumstances, few of us are equal.

Yet how ready we are to criticise and condemn others for persisting in habits of which we disapprove ! Before permitting ourselves to sit in judgment on our neighbour, a little self-discipline in this matter would be a wholesome exercise. We may not perceive that we have habits which are obnoxious to others or injurious to ourselves, and therefore we see no reason why we should restrain our usual inclinations in any direction, but until we have tried to do so, and succeeded, it does not become us to lay down the law for our weaker brethren.

Among the most reprehensible habits common to

young girls, and even married women, is that of dawdling. An incredible amount of time is wasted every day doing absolutely nothing, or pretending to be busy with some trifling occupation. The idle girl or woman spends an hour or two hours over her toilet, takes a whole morning to go to the dressmaker's, or the dentist's, needs to rest an hour or so after luncheon, pays a visit or two before dinner, and considers that she has had an exhausting day. A woman of affairs makes a complete toilet before breakfast, does a full day's work at her office, calls at the dressmaker's or dentist's on her way to or from luncheon, pays a few visits on her way home before dinner, and is none the worse for having utilized every minute of a truly busy day. She has learned the value of time and of system, and can stretch a day to meet any exigencies ; she acquires the habit of useful activity, and reaps more enjoyment from the consciousness of having performed many things well and quickly than is ever experienced by one who is free to enjoy her time exactly as she pleases, and who generally pleases to waste it. A sense of personal dignity and of the preciousness of time should surely suffice to prevent any intelligent girl or woman from wantonly wasting the hours that might be given to work, study, or healthful recreation. A strenuous effort should be made by any who are so tempted, to conquer the pernicious habit of dawdling. There are literally no end of useful occupations and interesting pastimes with which the longest days can be agreeably filled up by any one who cares to exercise a little fore-thought and discrimination in the matter.

To become enslaved by any habit is to lose the highest of all human prerogatives, the exercise of one's free will. The habit may be harmless enough, yet we are not less its slaves than the drunkard is to his intemperance, or the miser to his avarice. We cannot speak of

these without asperity, yet we are no more successful than they in resisting the temptations that beset us. We do not care for wine or cards, and we have no means of accumulating money, but we do take an inordinate pleasure in eating, in dress, in pleasant excitement, in gadding about, in prying into the affairs of others, or making aspersions on their characters. Whatever our favourite vice may be, we are just as much addicted to it as another is to the wine cup, the dice box, or the secret hoard. If we were sincerely desirous of seeing the world made better than it is we should be so intent on correcting our own evil tendencies, that we should have little time to observe the peccadilloes of our neighbours. It will take all our vigilance to watch for those diminutive chains of habit ever forming around us, and from which, unless we break them in time, we shall find it almost impossible in the future to wrench ourselves free.



CXVI

THE EFFICACY OF WORK.

Thank God every morning that you have something to do that day, which must be done whether you like it or not. Being forced to work and do your best will breed in you a hundred virtues which the idle never know.

—Charles Kingsley.

IRED of our ever-recurring, never-ending daily tasks, how many times do not we women fervently echo the poet's wish :

"O for a life of leisure and broad hours,
To think and dream and put away small things."

We believe that if time was our slave instead of our master, life would be an uninterrupted dream of happiness. And so it might and should be, if we could be trusted to order our own days in a manner that would be worthy of, and beneficial to us. But looking around us, we have not far to seek for instances of the deleterious, even completely demoralising influence of idleness upon the majority of those women whose circumstances relieve them from the necessity of working. There is no truer proverb than that "Satan finds mischief for idle hands to do." The girl or woman who feels no call on the higher qualities of her nature, who has not been trained to suffer and endure and deny herself for others ; whose sole aim in life is the gratifica-

tion of personal desires, is rarely proof against the temptations of vanity and self-indulgence which usually beset her. In the world which makes amusement the chief business of life, more hearts are broken and homes wrecked every year by the women whom idleness has perverted, than probably by any other class of human beings.

One can be morally, as well as physically, out of condition, the deterioration, in both cases, being due chiefly to the lack of exercise. Our virtues cannot thrive and become robust enough to withstand the assaults of severe temptation unless we are regularly disciplined in the performance of difficult and distasteful duties.

The lady of leisure who breakfasts in bed, dallies for hours over her toilet, and craves, as a daily programme, a ceaseless round of pleasant excitements, experiences ultimately such a weakening of moral fibre, that what to other women constitute the most inviolable sanctities of home, are as nothing to her weighed in the balance with her selfish and sinful inclinations.

Among the rich and great, examples of womanly worth are happily by no means rare, but invariably their existence indicates a sense of the value of time, and of the proper proportion of it which may lawfully be devoted to pleasure and mere worldly occupations. The farmer's wife would, no doubt, be mightily astonished if she could see how many and arduous are the duties performed by a well-intentioned woman of the world between breakfast and bed time. There are women who belong to neither of these two classes, but who occupy a middle ground between them, and it is to these, chiefly, that idleness is a curse. Their social position is not high enough to impose on them the semi-public duties which fill so important a part of a fashionable woman's day, and the major part of their house-

hold and maternal duties are performed by servants. Unless they carefully plan some useful disposition of their plentiful leisure, one of two things is likely to happen ; either they will develop such a profound interest in their own health that every little indisposition becomes exaggerated into a dangerous illness, so that half their time is spent in bed, or reclining on a couch, where they like to consider themselves objects of romantic interest to others, or if an exuberant vitality removes this contingency, they become inveterate gossips and gadabouts, always keenly alert to hear accounts of their neighbours' doings and sayings, and having a mischievous tendency to scatter broadcast the fruits of their insatiable curiosity.

In what noble contrast to such a shallow, purposeless existence stands forth the life of the busy wife and mother who is occupied daily with those loving tasks which, faithfully performed, make her home a sanctuary of rest and haven of happiness for her husband and children. Her hands may not be as white, nor her gowns as modish, as those of her more fashionable sister, but her heart is incomparably purer and nobler, and those who live with her ,instead of being slaves to her caprices, and discredited witnesses of her uselessness, learn to admire, while they also reap the benefit of those " hundred virtues which the idle never know."



DRIFTING.

No young persons drift into an achieving manhood or womanhood.

—W. Hoyt.

THE temptation to take life as it comes, to let Fate have its way with one, and to accept good fortune and reverses merely as the inevitable chances of existence, is one to which women are peculiarly liable. Whether it is that we are naturally indolent, or that the traditional dependence of our sex since the days when a woman could do nothing else but stay at home and spin while her lord hunted and fought, has unfitted us to take an active part in the battle of life, the fact remains that many among us are content to "drift" into womanhood, without any particular aim or purpose in view except to avoid fatigue or discomfort. Probably another reason why girls are so averse to making plans for the improvement of their time, which would cover any extended period, is the pleasant possibility of marriage, always looming in the background of their thoughts. But the waiting policy is a very poor one, and I think the unexpected lover who breaks in on a busy life and draws a woman away in spite of herself from the most engrossing interests or pursuits, is apt to be much more appreciated than the one whose approach has been eagerly looked for and counted upon, perhaps, for years. Without going to extremes and giving yourself airs about your mis-

sion in life, set quietly and systematically about achieving something, however small, so that it be useful or productive of pleasure to others. In doing so your matrimonial prospects will not be injured, but if anything increased, and you will be saved many a pang of envy and disappointment.



CXVIII

SUNNY SPOTS.

God has made sunny spots in the heart; why should we exclude the light from them?

—Haliburton.

EVERY few lives are all sunshine, but there will be “sunny spots” in all our hearts, if we take proper care to let the light of heaven penetrate in to them, and sedulously drive away every little gathering cloud of doubt, disappointment or sorrow. One of the mysteries of feminine nature is its tendency to magnify and brood over trouble, one might almost say, a preference for tears and melancholy. Quite young girls often develop this uncomfortable and morbid taste. They are like the people whom Mrs. Browning writes of, who “always sigh in thanking God.” From contact with all such poor spirited, narrow-minded creatures, may a kind heaven defend us! Give us rather for our daily companion and friend the woman who laughs and sings, and finds in the general contrariness of persons and things matter for harmless merriment rather than for sepulchral views of life. The dulness of existence is, to thousands of women in towns and country places, a favourite peg on which to hang complaints. But why should they be dull? The most contracted life has its exquisitely humourous aspects, lying right on the surface, too. Why not look for them and laugh at them and cause others to laugh as well? But in order to be

able to see them the “sunny spots” in the heart must be kept open to the light.

“It isn’t worth while,” I hear some moody girl exclaim ; yet the same young person reads with delight the annals of Drumtochty or Thrums or some other little hum-drum village, containing, if anything, fewer elements of human interest, romance or passion than her own, and yet never realises that the atmosphere of charm which a cunning writer has succeeded in throwing over the village in the book, is less the result of fortunate circumstances or a poetic imagination than of the author’s superior insight, which has revealed to him the under side of life, and opened up a world undreamed of by many of those who moved with dull, unseeing eyes, in the very midst of it.

I recommend to those who are looking for an object in life that of cultivating the sunny spots in their own hearts for the benefit not only of themselves, but of those with whom they live and who perhaps look up to and depend upon them. It will be found an exceedingly pleasant and interesting pursuit, and one which, among other desirable results, will insure the widespread personal popularity of the one who succeeds in it.



CXIX

BUILDING FOR ETERNITY.

When we build, let us think that we build for ever.

—Ruskin.

BECAUSE so many things in life are perishable and fleeting, the idea of permanence and immutability fills the mind with deep and peculiar satisfaction. “It will last for ever” is the highest word of praise, the sincerest expression of admiration, we can apply to the work of man. And, in the presence of any achievement which calls for this tribute, how weak and valueless do our own humble performances appear, how far down in the scale of human merit do we not seem to stand? Yet, if we but pause to reflect upon it, we shall see that we are all building for eternity, those among us, at least, who are faithfully performing our daily part in the great processes of construction by which families, communities and nations are formed and held together. True, and it is an infinite pity, a vast amount of work is wasted, and leaves no trace behind, because it was too ill-performed to serve any useful or agreeable purpose, and worse still, a great deal survives which would be better destroyed, because it bears marks of haste, incompetence and slovenliness, that constitute a standing reproach to the worker and a ceaseless source of vexation to all true lovers of order, beauty and fitness.

It is well worth the effort then, while we are about it,

to build with the slow and sure touch that ensures permanence, to leave our mark upon whatever we do, and to let it be a mark of which we are not ashamed. In this way our whole pathway through life can be traced by the good we have wrought and our persistent fidelity will not only yield a rich reward to ourselves, but will also be of incalculable benefit to those who follow in our footsteps and who may read the lesson of our lives in the solid achievements that endure after us.



ACQUIESCENCE.

*Order is Heaven's first law : and this confess,
Some are and must be, greater than the rest,
More rich, more wise; but who infers from hence
That such are happier, shocks all common sense.*

—Pope.

THE hardest riddle life holds for some of us, and one which at times clamours so loud for solution that its uproar in our ears drowns out all the sweeter harmonies of life, is this : Why am I less fortunate than others? Why has such a trouble befallen me, while my neighbour, immune from sorrow, makes merry all the day long? Why? Why? The ceaseless questioning goes on in tears and bitterness of spirit, but no answer comes ; the wherefore is a baffling, and to a much-tried heart, an exasperating secret, its inscrutability being deemed a sufficient justification for an attitude of deep resentment towards life and even towards the Giver of Life, who alone holds the clue to this impenetrable mystery.

To solve the riddle for you, dear reader, is quite beyond my power. I can only strongly recommend you to give up attempting to do so. The effort is so entirely futile.

“ Some are and must be, greater than the rest.” Accept the statement of the problem as final, and casting out all corroding envy and discontent from your

heart once for all—those you envy being indeed, often less happy than yourself, set about considering, not what you might do, in more favourable circumstances, but what you can do with your present opportunities.

Mind your arithmetic. This is really the most important point of all.

So many hours in the day. So many tasks to be performed. If the tasks are too many for your strength and your temper, then in the name of common sense, leave some undone, and don't worry about them. If you are a struggling young mother with a husband and five or six little ones to care for, single-handed, feed and clothe your dear ones as well and as lovingly as you can, and then be happy. Don't distress yourself needlessly because the parlour has not been dusted, nor the pantry shelves put in order, and don't suffer agonies of shame if some fashionable friend comes in in the midst of your toil and finds you a trifle disheveled, and sees the hole in Johnny's stocking, and perhaps three or four little unwashed faces peeping out from the ambush of your apron. Be brave and independent enough to feel that, having done your best, no more can be expected of you.

A great many beautiful theories are always being written up by people who have nothing else to do, on the ease with which home can be made clean and orderly by a woman of taste and intelligence, no matter how heavily she may be handicapped as to means, time, etc. But I have had occasion to see how absolutely impossible it is for one woman to do the work of three or four servants, and yet always appear neat and smiling ; so far from being shocked when I see signs of neglect and disorder in a house where a young mother is trying to bring up a large family, my heart goes out in sympathy to the mother, and I only wonder if she ever finds time for the needed recreation to keep

her health and spirits up under the great strain that is put upon her.

What she can do, however, is to simplify and minimise her tasks as much as possible. If she has to do her own dusting, let her put away all unnecessary ornaments and dust traps about the house that call for a daily expenditure of time and care. If she cannot spare time to dress the children more than once or at most twice a day, let her put dark frocks on them that will not too readily proclaim their lapse from perfect cleanliness ; if she must do all the cooking, let her avoid the preparation of troublesome dishes, and the multiplication of pots and pans ; and if a thoughtless neighbour or friend drops in at an inopportune moment, let her have the courage to tell her so, just as men and women engaged in business would do in similar circumstances.

Above all, I would ask her to be hopeful and cheerful, remembering that kindness and love in the home surpass all the benefits accruing from the greatest wealth.



MODESTY.

Do you wish men to believe good of you? Then say none.

—Blaise Pascal.

HE charm of perfect modesty is as rare as it is resistless. The temptation to speak about one's self, assuming the subject to be full of interest to others, is one which assails the best of us in weak moments. Our likes and our dislikes, our joys and our pains, our successes, and our failures, are so many endless themes on which we love to hold forth whenever we can find a listener to victimize. Almost invariably, the view we present of our case is flattering to ourselves. We are always in the right. Every one else is selfish, contrary, obstinate or stupid. The absurdity of our self-deception becomes most apparent when, after unburdening ourselves to some patient confidant, the same person is compelled to listen to the other side of the story, which makes us appear in a far less amiable light.

The gift of seeing ourselves as others see us, has been bestowed on few of us, and therefore wisdom cautions us to be modestly silent about ourselves, being especially careful not to plume ourselves on the possession of virtues in which others may have reason to think us lacking. Self-interest alone, apart from any higher motive, forbids the indulgence of a vain and boastful

spirit, because there is no surer means than this of earning a wide-spread unpopularity. Empty vessels, we know, produce more sound than full ones, and a shallow nature is never more successfully revealed, than by the process of blowing one's own trumpet. While still a mere girl a very salutary impression was left on my mind by the extraordinary modesty of the pastor of the church I attended, who, at that time, represented to me all that was best and highest in human nature. He was greatly beloved by his flock, and on his appearance any where was always greeted with affectionate enthusiasm. I soon remarked that he invariably diverted attention from himself as soon as possible, showing the most wonderful tact and fertility of resource in directing the conversation to some wholly impersonal subject. No matter how many times you tried to praise his sermons or to extol his charity, he always most adroitly turned your remarks to the advantage of some other person, and by degrees it was borne in upon all who knew him that the surest way to please him was not to flatter him or in any way make personal allusions. His example, in this respect, proved a more powerful sermon than many I have heard from pulpits, as I have never been able to forget the lesson of perfect modesty he taught us, and the memory of it often acts as a wholesome check in too expansive moments. This good man was, and is yet, loved and revered by his entire flock, thus proving the value of the French philosopher's advice. It is not enough to refrain from praising one's self, one must even refrain from too willingly lending an ear to the praises of others.

One can always remember enough faults to keep one humble, and without humility there can be no true greatness or real amiability of character.

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF OPPORTUNITY.

*When we look back at close of day,
Whether it close in sun or rain,
We yet can say, "It is a way
We shall not have to walk again."*

—C. H. Crandall.

 THERE is something very solemn in the thought that each new day on which we enter may be fraught with most important consequences. How many dramas, bright or tragic, are enacted daily, between the rising and the setting of the sun, for men and women who live in our very midst! Our turn must come, though we know not the day nor the hour.

*"The veil of the future our breath fitfully flaps,
And behind it sits ever the mighty Perhaps."*

It would not be wise to indulge in too many forebodings about the future, but neither is it becoming to be of those light-headed mortals who ignore all possibility of momentous happenings, and who are frequently overtaken by the most painful or solemn crises in their lives, at a time, and in a mood least suited to such deep experience. So it is worth while to reflect, not at the close, but better still at the opening of a day, that we are entering on a way we shall not have to walk again. It would be well if, in the glow of the early morning, some sense of the preciousness of

our opportunity might be borne in upon us. Whatever we are permitted to do for others will be done with more love if we keep in mind the possibility that we may be doing it for the last time. Indeed, every action we perform is truly performed for the last time, for never shall we do just such a thing in just the same way again. No two days are ever exactly alike, nor do our moods or opportunities ever repeat themselves accurately. How often and vainly have we not counted on the morrow to repair some neglect or unkindness of to-day! There is a perversity in fate which frowns on our best intentions. The most unforeseen circumstances come between us and the execution of our plans. Sometimes we are even denied the opportunity of offering excuses for ourselves. All which points the moral that the present only belongs to us, that it is of inestimable value, and that to squander it wilfully is to prove ourselves destitute of sense or conscience. Golden words and deeds make golden days. Let us try to live so that "at close of day," it will not be in self-reproach for lost opportunities, but with the glad consciousness of difficult duties faithfully performed that we shall say to ourselves :

"It is a way
We shall not have to walk again."



CXXIII

SWEET AND SERVICEABLE.

*The gentler-born the maiden, the more bound
· · · to be sweet and serviceable.*

—Lancelot and Elaine.

THE popular idea of a “high-born lady” seems to be of one in silk attire who does little the live-long day save preen herself in the presence of numerous admirers, or give haughty commands to her hired dependents. You will often see her thus impersonated by the little children in the street, who love to play that they are “rich ladies.” An assumption of vanity, idleness, and a disdainful air, is supposed to give the proper cachet to the actor of this favourite part.

This erroneous impression of the character of a lady of high degree is no doubt due to the fact that youthful and other inexperienced observers readily mistake the vulgar ostentation of the newly-enriched—who most frequently come under their notice—for the real dignity and stateliness of the well-born, with whom they are seldom, if ever, brought into actual contact. It is a revelation to many, on their first introduction into the higher social altitudes to find that life, here, is taken, if anything, more seriously than by the toilers of the earth, with the difference that the rich and great voluntarily assume the most onerous tasks, and discharge them with a fidelity that is rarely surpassed, if even approached, by workers in humble spheres.

As a rule, also, it is quite exceptional to hear those in high places complaining of the demands made on their time and energies. They labour cheerfully and steadily, with no thought of shirking their tasks, often, indeed, sinning by excess of energy, rather than through lack of it. But, in the case of a well-born woman, especially, whatever the work she sets herself to do, she invests it with some portion of the grace and charm peculiar to herself. She never ceases to be "sweet" while striving to be "serviceable." She distinguishes between honourable toil and ignoble drudgery, and while longing to serve others, does so in a manner which compels them to respect her.

Of course, there are drones in the great human hive, women who are content to sit idly and contemplate their own white bejewelled hands while the work of the world is being done by others. But these, as a rule, are not the gently-born.

They are the immediate descendants of poor and hard-working parents, who, having come into sudden possession of wealth, are unacquainted with its uses, beyond those of supplying the material needs which in days of adversity were the only ones they recognized. You find women of this type thronging the summer hotels, sitting aimlessly about in drawing-rooms and piazzas, usually over-dressed, and consumed with curiosity concerning their fellow-boarders.

Can any more dreary and undignified pastime be imagined than this deliberate "loafing?" Is anything farther from the ideal Tennyson sets before us, of the gentle-born maiden, bound to be sweet and serviceable?

Unfortunately, sometimes, the mother of growing girls sets them an example of indolence which is bound to prove pernicious. Relieved from the necessity of performing ordinary household tasks, she will even resign all the comforts of a home in order to escape the

attendant responsibilites. In a hotel or boarding-house she finds absolute immunity from work of every kind, and, without counting the cost, accepts this sorry makeshift for a home. She neither reads, knits, sews, nor indulges in healthy exercise, but is ignobly content to sit with folded hands accumulating flesh and gossip as if no other object in life existed for her, and apparently unaware that her happiness and dignity would be inestimably enhanced if she would only bestir herself to learn some new accomplishment or useful art, to see some new sights or identify herself with some movement of a progressive or benevolent character.

But if the habit of exercising all the faculties and the desire of living to some purpose are not cultivated in youth, it is almost impossible to acquire them in later years.

Therefore it is imperative for the young to keep alive and alert to all opportunities of self-improvement, not striving for vain distinctions that depend on outward appearances only, but with the wish to become "sweet and serviceable" in their own homes, and of preserving those attributes through life in whatever position they may be called to fill.



NATURE'S SCHOOL.

*Tune your ear
 To all the wordless music of the stars
 And to the voice of nature, and your heart
 Shall turn to truth and goodness as the plant
 Turns to the sun.*

—Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

LETTERS come to me often from mothers in remote country districts, on the lonely ranche, or in the heart of the mountains, deplored the impossibility of securing a good education for their children, there being no schools within a radius of many miles of the secluded farmhouse. I must confess that, far from feeling sorry for those children, I always experience a certain satisfaction in knowing that they are quite safe from all the mischievous influences which in too many public and private schools more than counterbalance the educational advantages enjoyed by those in attendance. Many a time, passing by one of our city school buildings and seeing a crowd of rude, noisy and untidy children swarming out, pushing and jostling each other, calling each other vulgar names, in loud, disagreeable tones, I have wondered if it would not have been better for more than one among them to have been brought up in the peaceful country, or hidden among the mountains, with only a mother's love to teach them the wonders of the glorious universe. It is a noteworthy fact that the country-bred girls and young men who come to the city to earn a livelihood, are invariably many degrees more refined in their tastes and instincts than their city cousins of the same class.

Long and close contact with nature has always this effect on human character. It uplifts, purifies and broadens the mind. A man or woman who enjoys the beauty of lake, wood or meadow, who is affected by the splendour of the sunset, or the glory of the dawn, who sees in the majestic ocean and the everlasting hills the sign manual of a power greater than human, who feels him or herself in a manner related to every living thing that grows or walks upon the earth, will never be greedy, selfish, untruthful, cruel, vulgar, or in any unworthy sense passionate. What higher education than this should we hope to secure for any child ? Whatever his future destiny, only let the background of his infancy be great nature herself, and his mother, with the aid of a few good books, can give him a finer training than any to be obtained in the best equipped schools or colleges.

The strength of England to-day, and the pre-eminence of her sons in every part of the world to which they have penetrated, is largely due to the fact that country life is, according to the British conception of comfort and happiness, the ideal one. With rare exceptions, every English gentleman is a practical farmer, and his children are brought up for the most part out of doors. In this country, there is an unfortunate tendency to crowd into the cities, for the sake of the so-called advantages, which in too many cases only cramp and vulgarize the minds of the growing generation. Any mother who has the true welfare of her children at heart will keep them as near as possible to the greatest of all teachers, Nature herself. Upon the foundation laid in this model school it will be easy enough in later years to lay a superstructure of special training for any chosen art, profession or other calling.

